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THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR ORIGINAL

MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY

AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.

NEW-YORK.

"The freedom and power of the press, in a community like ours, is a price put into our hands, not only to get wisdom, but to impart it to *others*, and to *all*. We are under sacred obligations, then, of which we can not divest ourselves, to use this power, and to use it well."

"My people are destroyed, for lack of knowledge."—*Hosca* iv. 6.

VOL. III.

FOR THE YEAR COMMENCING JUNE 1828.

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1828-9.



Southern District of New-York, ss-

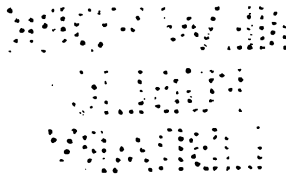
BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 22d day of May, A. D. 1895, in the fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Austin Dickinson, of the said District, hath deposited in this (L. S.) office the title of a Book, or Periodical Work, the right whereof he claims as Editor and Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"The National Preacher: or Monthly Sermons from Living Ministers. Edited by Rev. Austin Dickinson, New-York."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also to an act, entitled "An Act, supplementary to an act, entitled An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL,

Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.



PREFACE TO VOL. III.

IN the course of this Volume, from fourteen to twenty-five thousand Numbers have been published monthly ; making about two hundred thousand during the year. They have found their way into most parts of the United States, and, some of them, to other quarters of the globe. What influence they may silently exert, in the conference room, the family circle, or the retired chamber ; or what bearings some of them may have on the nation, and the heathen world, will be told, when " God shall bring every work into Judgment."

In the first Number, the youthful Christian is summoned to a lofty standard of intellectual and moral excellence ; and that perfect EXAMPLE is presented, which should be imitated by all mankind. In the next, is exhibited the blessed influence of divine truth, on the understanding and heart. In the third, the delusive hope which some cherish, that after death it shall be as well with the wicked as with the righteous, is effectually exposed. And the fourth should convict all self-destroyers, of the exceeding malignity of sin ; and arouse them to seek help, where only it can be found. The next Number illustrates in what manner the power of Truth and Love may and must be exerted for renovating the world. The sixth furnishes weighty considerations in behalf of Prayer for rulers. And the seventh should convince both ministers and churches, of their sad defection from the example of Christ and his apostles ; and of their peculiar and increasing responsibilities. The one which follows, will be read with interest, by all who would grow in the likeness of their Redeemer and God. In the ninth Number, the delaying sinner may see, amid the beams of God's goodness, his own ingratitude, guilt, and danger ; and the mere moralist and philosophical christian may perceive the striking contrast between his views and feelings, and those of the true believer. In Number ten, the statesman and patriot may learn, how his country's glory and happiness may be effectually secured, or inevitably lost. In the next, all may learn the unchanging character of the God with whom they have to do ; and the wisdom of submitting, without reserve, to his sovereign will. And the concluding Number presents an illustrious example of that full assurance of faith and hope, which the diligent Christian may attain.

While no part of a preacher's duty will be undervalued, it is intended, hereafter, to insert a greater proportion of such Sermons, as are designed, by divine help, to have an immediate and permanent effect on *sinners*. Notwithstanding mankind are yet mostly in rebellion against God, there is, perhaps, from the sweetness and elevation of heavenly themes, a strong temptation to preach more frequently to saints, than is consistent with the rule of *giving to every one his portion in due season*. But he who keeps in view that great dividing line which extends alike through both worlds—who realizes that on the one side is nought but rebellion and suffering, and on the other, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*—he surely may even *forget* those already gained, if so doing, he can *persuade others* to turn, ere they reach the *impassable gulf*.

To despair of any, not yet under the final reprobation of God, is *unchristian*—is dishonorable, alike to the word, and blood, and Spirit of Christ, and to the Hearer of prayer. And, at the same time, the possibility of losing a soul by delay, is too tremendously awful, to allow any who have *words of eternal life* to dispense, ever to encourage *waiting in sin* till to-morrow.

The Sermons of this Volume, it is seen, are chiefly from those, who, in the ordinary course of Providence, must soon finish their testimony on earth. That they may have their full reward in heaven, and that the daily increasing circulation of this work may help to inspire others so to write for it, as to *save themselves and them that read*, is the fervent prayer and hope of the

NEW-YORK, MAY, 1829.

EDITOR.

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THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go...Teach all Nations...Matt. xxviii. 19.

VOL. III.

NEW-YORK, JUNE, 1828.

No. 1.

SERMON XXXVII.

By LEONARD BACON, A.M.
NEW-HAVEN, CONNECTICUT.

DUTIES OF YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

I JOHN ii. 14.—*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

THE fact that these young men were Christians—the fact that they had begun to receive that spiritual strength which Divine grace imparts to all the followers of the Redeemer—the fact that the word of God had entered into their hearts, and was abiding there, like a well of water, springing up to everlasting life—the fact that they had overcome the enemy of their souls—the fact, in short, that they had been born of the Spirit, was the very reason why the apostle wrote to warn them against sin, and to exhort them to press onward to the highest point of Christian holiness.

So now, it is not enough for the youthful Christian, that he has repented and believed. The work of pastoral vigilance over him does not cease at the moment he is brought into the kingdom of God. It is but just begun. He needs perpetually to be warned against the illusions that beset his path, and the snares that may interrupt his progress towards celestial glory; and perpetually to be incited to holier aspirations, and to more devoted usefulness.

Upon youthful Christians great responsibilities are devolving. I speak, not only of the moral influence which they are now exerting, or which they ought to be exerting, on their companions and friends, and of the results which must come from that influence properly directed; but I speak more particularly of the bearing which their future character and efforts are to have on the general prosperity and triumph of the Church of God. The moral character of another generation is to be shaped by their spirit and their examples. The religious enterprises and triumphs of another age are to be achieved by their hands. The immediate destinies of that great kingdom, which is advancing to fill the earth with light

and joy, are soon to be intrusted to their keeping, for them to accelerate its march to universal power, or to delay the consummation of its glory. Great results are therefore depending upon what they shall be, and what they shall do. And in this period of youth, it is for them to determine how well fitted they shall be to discharge these great responsibilities. They have a noble part to act in the history of the world's redemption; and now, if ever, they must acquire those habits of devotion, and that character of decided and powerful Christian influence, which may enable them nobly to sustain the noble part that will devolve upon them.

It is not enough, then, for the young Christian to be barely a believer;—it is not for him to be satisfied with having just so much piety as will carry him reputably through the world, and safely into heaven; it should be his aim to become a Christian of eminent piety and of eminent usefulness. It should be his aim to cultivate all those habits, and to acquire all those traits of character, which will qualify him to discharge all his responsibilities.

Suffer me, then, to suggest to youthful Christians some traits of character which they must now acquire and cultivate as a preparation for sustaining, happily to themselves and acceptably to God, the part which they will so soon be summoned to perform.

And among the points of character which the young Christian ought to cultivate, I would specify the following: First, *A thirst for knowledge*. Secondly, *The spirit of Christian activity*. Thirdly, *Self-denial*; and Fourthly, *The habit and spirit of prayer*.

I. The young Christian ought to aim at the highest degree of *intellectual improvement* within his reach. An ignorant man may be truly a Christian; may be devout; may be safe and happy; may be in a measure useful;—not, however, because of his ignorance, but in spite of it. He may be truly a Christian, devout and happy; but his Christian character, instead of resting on his ignorance, will rest on what he knows. He will love God, not because he knows him not, but because he knows him. He will hope in Christ, not because he is ignorant of what Christ has done, but because he knows that Christ has died to redeem him from his iniquities. His desires will tend towards heaven, not because he is ignorant, but because he knows that in his Father's house are many mansions. His devotion, if it were the devotion of ignorance, would be superstition; but being Christian devotion, it arises from his knowing that his God is the true God, and a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And that happy feeling of safety, under the overshadowing wing of the Almighty, is not a delusion which the darkness of his understanding has created, but a reality, included in the fact which he knows, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God. Now take this ignorant Christian and pour upon his mind a flood of knowledge. Let his faculties be expanded and strengthened by some sudden influence, till he shall have all that reach of thought and all those powers of discrimination, which belong to the mind fully instructed into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Let his conceptions of God, and of Christ,

and of all eternal things, become, in a moment, clear, and wide, and powerful. Will not the change from ignorance to knowledge heighten and beautify all the graces of his Christian character? Will not his love become more fervent, his confidence more firm, his hope more inspiring, his devotion more spiritual, and that happy feeling of security more tranquil, as the objects and motives of these several affections are more clearly apprehended? Will not the change be kindred in its nature to that change which passes on the spirit when it escapes from the darkness and blindness of its earthly tabernacle to stand in the full brightness of the throne?

Again, the ignorant Christian may be useful; but his ignorance will always limit and impede his usefulness. He may be useful, though he knows but a little; and if he can make himself useful, with the little knowledge which he has, how much more useful would he be if the sphere of his intelligence were widened. His usefulness, of course, can be proportioned only to his influence; and it is to be remembered that one of the greatest means of influence is knowledge—intellectual superiority. He may be useful, for he may have other means of influence to supply, in some degree, the want of knowledge;—he may have wealth, that shall give him power to bless the destitute with the knowledge of the gospel, or to cause the widow's heart to sing for joy;—he may be placed in circumstances where his mere example of industrious and unrepining toil, or of calm submission to the will of God, shall bring persuasion and conviction to a thousand hearts. But if, in addition to these sources of influence, he had that power which springs from superior intelligence, how much wider would be his usefulness—how much more glorious his testimony for God.

Now, to apply this to the youthful Christian, I would say, aim at the highest degree of intelligence which your condition in life will allow you to attain. In this country, and at this age of the world, that degree of intelligence is far higher than indolent minds are ready to suppose. There is not within the reach of my voice a single youthful Christian, who may not consistently aim at such a degree of knowledge as will make him widely useful in his appropriate sphere.

In the first place, study the Bible; study it every day, and let it be your theme of nightly meditation. Study it with constant invocation of "that Spirit which can enrich with all knowledge;" for there is no other way in which its purest glories can be made to beam so brightly on the soul. Study it in course; so as to understand, not only the meaning of words and verses and chapters, but the design and scope and method of each entire book. Study it with all the helps which you can command to aid you in understanding, not only its general import, but all its shades of thought—all its local and personal allusions. Study it systematically; seeking to understand its doctrines in their appropriate combination and arrangement, and in all their applications to the welfare of the soul, to the business of living, to the union of believers with God and with each other, and to the final triumph of the kingdom of Christ.

In the next place, study to know the dealings of God with his church.

Know, as far as possible, all that he is doing for the advancement of his kingdom. Make yourself acquainted with the signs of the times, and the great events that are occurring from day to day—the outpourings of the Spirit on the churches—the operations of benevolent enterprise in every land—the triumphs of the gospel in heathen nations. Make yourself acquainted with these things, not carelessly and superficially, as is the case with most men, but thoroughly: so that, instead of taking up with indistinct impressions, you may gain that knowledge, the acquisition of which invigorates the mind by discipline, and the possession of which enriches it with wisdom.

In the next place, seek to become acquainted with the history and character of distinguished Christians. Learn what they were—what was the secret of their piety and their usefulness; and thus drink deep into their wisdom.

And, to add one more specification, make yourself familiar in some measure with the history of Christ's kingdom in past ages. Learn to take up the story of the Church, where the history of the Apostles leaves it with Paul preaching in his hired house at Rome, and to trace the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, through persecution and prosperity, through ages of darkness and eras of light, down to the present day. And suffer not yourself to be ignorant of any thing which a well-informed Christian ought to know, in such an age and such a country as this.

Do you say, that this is setting you to a great task—to a great course of reading and study? It is indeed a great course, compared with the reading which in our day is too frequently put into the hands of youth. And against that kind of reading let me warn you. It is easy to read “religious stories,” “fictions founded upon fact,” and a thousand such-like things, that are every day put into the hands of children and youth—all designed for their improvement. But the difficulty is, that though such books may rouse the mind to sensibility, and may often illustrate some lesson of morality or of devotion, they impart ordinarily no vigour to the mental powers; they give the mind no stores of knowledge; they do little to enlarge its scope of thought, and to teach it habits of reflection and of wisdom: and the danger is, that, abounding as they do within the reach of almost every individual, they will occupy each leisure hour; and, creating in the mind a sickliness of taste and feeling, they will not only enervate it by their own direct influence, but also shut it out from the healthful fountains of knowledge and of spiritual life. I say then, choose for yourself, whether your Christian usefulness shall be always hindered and impaired by your own ignorance, and your Christian character always marked with the littleness and imperfection of an unenlightened mind, or whether your usefulness shall be wide as the sphere in which God shall give you opportunity to work, and your Christian character bright as the privileges which he confers upon you. If you choose the latter, as in all duty you are bound to do, you must aim steadily at the highest point of intelligence which you are capable of reaching; and you must make a business of this pursuit—a serious daily business, so far as more immediate duties will permit—a matter of conscience and solemn Christian obligation.

II. The youthful Christian ought by all means to cultivate a *spirit of Christian activity*. There are Christians who are not *active* Christians. They are active men, perhaps—men of great business, and great enterprise;—but as Christians they do nothing. They have intelligence perhaps, and every other means of influence; but they are not active in the cause of Christ; and so their influence is for the most part useless to the church. They may be, now and then, wrought upon by others to contribute something of their influence to the advancement of the cause of God; but they are rarely, if ever, active,—they are passive, having no motion of their own. Now the difficulty with such Christians—and it is a great one—is, that when they became Christians, they did not resolve on the right standard of excellence:—they have neither received, and very likely never will receive, such an impulse as effectually to rouse within them the spirit of Christian enterprise: they have never found the habit of untiring activity in the service of Christ. And so they live along, with a reputable profession of Christianity, doing nothing, or next to nothing, for the cause which they have espoused; nothing directly, and very little indirectly, for the salvation of souls: and at last when they die, neither the church nor the world is much the better for their religion. They have been active enough as men of business; they have left behind perhaps a great amount of property, to be the temporal and eternal ruin of their children; but as Christians they never felt they had any thing great to do. And when they reach heaven—if indeed there is room there for such Christians—when they look down upon the world they have left, and see how little they have done for it, they will for ever regret their slothfulness, and for ever adore that grace which could forgive such guilty inefficiency. Now it is for you, my young friends, to choose whether you will be such Christians—mere ciphers in the kingdom of God—or whether you will be Christians to some purpose. If you do not choose to spend your life in doing nothing for the cause of Christ, now is the time for you to establish such habits of activity, and to cultivate such a spirit of Christian enterprise, as will hereafter guide you and impel you into every path of usefulness which Providence may open. Cultivate therefore now such a spirit and such habits, that hereafter the work of serving Christ, by efforts for the advancement of his kingdom, may not be to you a strange work—a work too strange to be attempted. If you do not form these habits now, probably you never will; for it is very rare that an individual converted in youth is, in after-life, so converted a second time as to acquire a new Christian spirit and to form new Christian habits. The general form which his character takes at the beginning, commonly continues to the end. I say then, if you are to be an active Christian hereafter, you must be an active Christian now. Opportunities for being active—opportunities for cultivating the spirit of Christian enterprise—are now abundant. The church is arming all her sons for self-defence and for conquest. In the Sabbath-schools, in the various associations for missions, for distributing the Bible, for circulating religious tracts, for all the purposes of Christian benevolence, there is work for young hands to do;

and in these ways you can be active now, and can be cherishing that spirit of enterprise, which will not only enlarge your Christian usefulness and augment your Christian enjoyment through life, but will swell the happiness of your eternal song in heaven. The circle of your brothers and sisters, or the wider circle of your youthful friends, affords a thousand occasions for Christian activity—which if you improve, you may not only turn many to righteousness, but win for yourself a brighter and still brighter crown of everlasting glory.

III. The young Christian ought to learn the discipline of *self-denial*. If any man will come after me, says Christ, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. The denial of self—the renunciation of selfish pursuits—the sacrifice of selfish gratifications—is, throughout the word of God, one of the most obvious and essential traits of Christian character. And yet this trait of character is but little insisted on, and still less exhibited in the conduct of those who bear the Christian name. The professors of Christianity in our day are at ease in Zion; they dwell in ceiled houses; they stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock; they chant to the sound of the viol; they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Look round on the majority of those who call themselves the followers of Christ, and see how much their religion costs them. Habitual self-denial for the cause of the Redeemer—the daily bearing of the cross—there is nothing like it in their creed or in their thoughts. What superfluity do they retrench, that they may have something for the work of God? What luxury do they forego? Who is it that is apparelled more gayly or more expensively than they and their children? Whose entertainments—whose sacrifices on the altar of fashion and to the pride of life are more splendid, more luxurious, more costly than theirs? Who more eager in the pursuit of wealth than they? In short, who is more conformed to the world in its reputable pleasures, in its pride, in its pursuits? And all the while, from the four winds there comes into their ears the cry of misery to be relieved, the cry of ignorance to be instructed, the cry of sin to be removed by the application of the Gospel, and the shouts of the armies of Immanuel rushing to the victory. Yet, to aid the triumphs of the cross, to heal the diseases and relieve the miseries of a wicked world, they bestow nothing but the crumbs that fall from their table—nothing but that which they cannot respectably appropriate to themselves or their children.

Now if ever the church is to achieve the conquest of the world, the work must be accomplished by Christians of another stamp from these. The ancient self-denial—the ancient bearing of the cross—must not only be revived, but must be general among the followers of Christ; and men must feel that it costs something to be Christians. Therefore I say to you, my youthful brethren, gird yourselves now to follow your Redeemer. Learn in youth the holy discipline of self-denial. Try now how much you can retrench from your pleasures and your pride for the

sake of glorifying God. Discipline yourselves by self-denial—by bearing the cross daily—so that you may be a chosen generation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

IV. The young Christian needs to cultivate the *habit and spirit of prayer*. It is prayer, constant fervent prayer, habitual intimate intercourse with God, that spreads over the Christian character its beauty, its celestial graces, its spiritual unction. And this intercourse with God, this fervency of supplication, which arrays the believer in the brightest panoply of heaven, is a grace to be attained and perfected, like all the other Christian graces, by cultivation. It is not bestowed at once, complete and sure. The spirit of devotion is to be gained and to be made constant and characteristic, only by cultivating the habit of devotion. And without the habit and the spirit of devotion—without the habit of constant and earnest prayer,—though a man be ever so intelligent on all the points of Christian knowledge, and though he be ever so active and ever so self-denying—all his knowledge will be only that which puffeth up; all his activity will be the activity of a bustling and meddling spirit; all his self-denial will be self-righteousness. Without the constant habit of prayer he may have fits of devotional excitement, but his light will not burn with the calm and steady brightness that increases to the perfect day. Therefore cultivate in youth the habit and the spirit of devotion. Cultivate this habit in your closets, and cultivate the habit of praying with each other and for each other. So shall you advance from strength to strength. So shall you be like the fleece of Gideon, rich with the dew of heaven, while all around is dry. So shall your path, through a world of temptation, be bright like the path of him who spent whole nights in prayer upon the solitary mountains. So shall you grow in grace and in every divine attainment—your character gaining, continually, symmetry and strength, till you shall reach the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Would to God I could make you know what results are depending upon you; what interests of the church and of a dying world are involved in your future character and efforts. When I look on the young Christians of this age, and reflect that they are soon to sustain the ancient glories of the church of God,—when I look abroad on the earth and see the crisis that is at hand,—when I listen to the cries that come from every quarter of the world, summoning the people of God to new efforts and more splendid exhibitions of piety;—I seem to see the hoary generations that are past rising up from their repose to watch over the progress of the young followers of Christ;—I seem to hear the voices of blest spirits above, cheering them on in the career of piety;—I seem to see a world in misery, turning its imploring hands to them, and beseeching them to be worthy of their name, worthy of their privileges, worthy of their noble destiny;—I seem to hear—I do hear God himself speaking from the heavens, *Ye have chosen the better part, be faithful unto death, and I will give you crowns of life.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

BY LEONARD BACON, A.M.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

I JOHN, ii. 6.—*He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.*

THE meaning of the text is, that every Christian ought to regulate his conduct by the example of Christ.

There are those who, while they insist on the example of Christ, refuse to acknowledge whatever we mean by the glory of his character, and deny all that we understand by the efficacy of his atonement. Against errors so subversive of the Gospel, we feel bound to be watchful. And this is right. It is right that every Christian should beware of delusion; and it is peculiarly proper that those who are set for the defence of the Gospel should warn the churches against prevailing error.

But when the mind is placed in the attitude of controversy, it is always in danger of taking such views of the truth, as, if not decidedly erroneous, are at least distorted. He who is most zealous for the avoidance of some individual error, is often most liable to fall under the unnoticed influence of an opposite delusion. Thus Christians, and perhaps Christian ministers, of our day, in their zeal to defend the atonement of the Savior, and his true Divinity, *may* be in danger of forgetting, or rather in some degree overlooking the obligations of all, and especially of such as hope for salvation through him, to make his example the exact model of their own conduct.

I say this, by way of caution against an evil to which we are all liable. We are in danger of reading the Bible and studying its truths too much as controversialists; and if we do so, we are in danger of fixing our attention, not too closely perhaps, but too exclusively on those particular topics of the Gospel which we are more specially zealous to support. While we are looking for proof-texts, we overlook what does not aid us in our controversy; and thus we lose that devotional and practical effect which the reading of God's word in simplicity of soul cannot fail to produce.

If you will forget, for a season, all the views of the Gospel which you have received from controversial and abstract systems of Christian truth, and in that state of mind take up the writings of the New Testament, you will see how frequently and forcibly the example of our Lord is insisted on as a practicable subject of familiar and constant imitation. It

is nowhere made a matter of formal discussion ; but it is often brought forward, as if it were among the most powerful of all considerations to direct the feelings and fashion the conduct. When Christ would enforce on his disciples the duty of humility and mutual kindness, he tells them of what he had done in performing for them the humblest offices. The Apostle to the Gentiles, while he tells his Corinthian brethren that in all things he seeks not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, calls upon them to join with him in this imitation of the Savior. In like manner when he would inspire the believers at Philippi with that lowliness of mind and that benevolence of heart which might lead them to forego, for each other's good, their individual convenience, he sets before them the example of Christ, "who being in the form of God, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," receiving at last a glorious exaltation as the reward of his humility, and pains, and death. And when he would enforce the same lesson on the church at Rome, he employs the same argument ; "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification ; for even Christ pleased not himself." So, likewise, when he would stir up the Hebrew Christians to patience, to constancy, to high and manly daring for the faith ; having told them first of the multitudes, who in every former age had labored and endured in the cause of God, and who are now looking down with sympathy, and as it were with the voice of cheering, on the pains and conflicts of the church below ; he brings forward, as the last and most persuasive of all, the example of Jesus, and commands them, if they would run with patience the race set before them, to "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." In these cases the example of our Lord is brought forward as a motive to the exercise of some particular virtue. But in the text the declaration is more general ; the whole moral character of Christ is to be imitated by all who profess to be his. And in those numerous passages which speak of the Christian as *following* his Lord, as *putting on* the new man, or as conformed to the *image of God's Son*, the same proposition is intimated with equal clearness. And from these and the many other Scripture testimonies, we might without rashness conclude that *one purpose* which God designed to accomplish by the mission of his Son, was, that he might magnify the law by displaying before men a visible and winning example of complete obedience.

My design at this time is, to commend the example of our Lord, not only to your admiring regards, but also to your constant and diligent imitation. And that I may do this let me exhibit its **PERFECTION**, its **PRACTICABLENESS**, and its **IMPORTANCE AS A MEANS OF MORAL CULTURE**.

I. The example of Christ is *perfect*. It illustrates every description of moral excellence. By this I mean that his conduct was a living exhibition of the *whole duty of man*. The history of our Lord is not merely what we

see in some poetic conceptions of excellence—the development of a single virtue. It is the complete union of all attributes that can be conceived of as virtuous and praiseworthy in human character; the perfect combination of whatsoever things are true, or honest, or just, or pure, or lovely, or of good report. Here is devotion, deep, fervent, and unwavering. Here is faith in God, ever corresponding to the devotion which it nourishes. Here is benevolence, wide as the universe, and active for the happiness of all within the circuit of its influence. Here is fortitude, which nothing can appal, and constancy that never swerves. Here is patience, that stands up to endure under every affliction; and submission, bowing without a murmur to the will of God—though he command the extremity of toil and the agony of death. Here is industry, devoting every moment and every faculty to the accomplishment of the plans which his benevolence had conceived and his piety had sanctified. Here is meekness, that remained unmoved under the grossest indignities, and amid provocations the most grievous to be borne. Here is humility, that exulted not in the hosannas of applauding thousands, nor in the offered robes of royalty, nor in the consciousness of power and wisdom and every excellence that men admire—a lowliness of soul that delighted in retirement from applause, that chose the humblest companions for his retinue of friends, and that fled from before his countrymen, not when danger threatened, not when anger burst forth in fury, but when they would have taken him by force and made him king. Here, in short, is the development of every virtue that can ennoble the character of man, the exhibition of every excellence that can find acceptance with God.

II. As the example of Christ exhibits every description of moral excellence, it is also held forth as a *practicable* subject of imitation for all men. Here I am aware of contradicting, in some sort, if not the opinions, at least the indefinite impressions of many a Christian. The impression is not unfrequent among those who call themselves the followers of Christ, that, though they are bound to imitate their Lord, it is enough if they follow him, like Peter, “a great way off;” and therefore, though they may tread in his steps, it is with a timid and a hesitating progress. There lurks within their minds the feeling, that it is impossible for them to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, and that therefore they are not to aim at a point so elevated as his spotless example. Such an impression is fatal to the growth of piety. And therefore, I repeat it, the example of Christ is a practicable example for universal imitation.

The excellences of Christ's example, which we are called to imitate, are excellences of which all men are capable. And the reason is,—they are *moral* excellences and *human* excellences. They consist not in the power, and majesty, and wisdom of the Deity, but in the voluntary actions, the choices, the preferences of the man Christ Jesus. The example of Christ has nothing to do with the peculiar constitution of his person, or with the adorable faculties of his divine nature; it has respect only to the manner in which he employed his faculties. It consists not in his mys-

terious oneness with his Father on the throne of heaven, but in his devotion—those prayers consuming the long watches of the night—those fastings and strivings with human trials—those solitary communings with his God and our God. It consists not in the power that raised the dead and swayed the elements; but in his benevolence,—that ruling determination of his mind, under the influence of which he “went about doing good.” It consists not in the wisdom that unveiled futurity, and brought down instruction from the skies; but in the kindness and gentleness that condescended to the prejudices of the weak, and the ignorance of the unenlightened. It consists not in his office as the Redeemer of the world, nor in the great results that were depending on his obedience and death; but in that obedience itself, in the patience that endured to the end, in the humility that rejected earthly honours and distinctions, in the submission that cried “Thy will, not mine, be done,”—in the self-denial that forewent all personal convenience and comfort for the promotion of his object, and in all those moral excellences which were the glory and perfection of his human nature. All these excellences, you perceive, belonged to his conduct, not to the peculiar constitution of his being; they are moral and human excellences; and consequently not one of them is beyond the capacity of any mind which is not incapable of every moral action. Say not that Christ was free from human infirmities; for then what means it, that he took part of flesh and blood? What means it, that in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren? What means the story of his perilous temptation? What means it that he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and hath been tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin? You cannot deny, then, that the excellences of Christ's example are excellences of which all men are capable, except by arming the impenitent with an unanswerable excuse for all their unbelief and hardness of heart.

The excellences of Christ's character are excellences which all men are *commanded* to possess and cultivate. The devotion, the faith, the patience, the submission, which we see in Jesus,—his benevolence, his industry, his humility,—all the virtues which are so forcibly exhibited in his history, and which make up that character of perfection, are virtues which every man is daily called to exercise. Whenever you can find a man on whom there is no obligation to benevolence, or to industrious enterprise in the work of serving God,—whenever you can find a man who has no need of devotion or of faith, no calls for the exercise of patience and submission, no occasions for fortitude and constancy, or of whom meekness and humility are not required,—whenever you can find such a man, you will find a man who need not make the character of Christ the model of his own. But till such a man be found, it cannot be questioned that the example of our Lord is an example of the very excellences which all mankind are bound to possess and exhibit.

Nor is this all. The *circumstances* in which Christ lived, and the scenes through which he passed, are, for the most part, of that plain and every-day description which makes the exhibitions of his perfect excellence more familiar to the comprehension, and more accessible to the

imitation of all. Had he been born amid the pomp and splendors of royalty; had he been called, like Moses, to contend with a proud, capricious monarch, and to exercise dominion over a rude and wayward people; or had it been his lot to act like Joshua upon the tented field and in the bloody conflict;—pure and perfect as his example might have been, it would have been, or at least it would have seemed to be, only an example for kings and rulers, or an example for distinguished patriots, the founders of a nation's laws, or the defenders of a nation's freedom. It would have been difficult to bring down the exhibitions of his holiness from the bewildering splendor of their circumstances, to the familiar apprehension and daily imitation of the great majority of men. But as it is, there is no such difficulty. His excellences of character are enveloped with no glare of circumstances; they are all personal excellences, and all naked to our perception. His virtues we contemplate and admire, not as the virtues of a lawgiver or a conqueror, but as the virtues of a man. And thus, in the wise designs of God, this high example of every moral excellence is held out before men of every condition as a subject for their daily imitation.

III. As the example of Christ is perfect and practicable, so likewise it is wisely provided for mankind as a most *important means of moral culture*. It is wisely provided, because human nature is moved, especially to virtue, by example rather than by precept; and because human nature is made for lofty purposes, and succeeds best where its aim is the highest.

The measure of all moral character, the rule by which all human actions will be tried, is the *holy law of God*. That law he has written in his word, intelligible to every apprehension, and enforced by high rewards and awful penalties. But such is the perverseness of the human mind, that it is not easily attracted to obedience by the mere precept of the law, which seems to it like some cold and formal abstraction. The bent of man in all his dispositions is wayward; and, therefore, in the effort after moral excellence, he needs peculiarly the influence of example. He needs no such influence to lead him away from God, and away from all that constitutes the true dignity and happiness of his own existence. In all the paths of sin he can walk, as if by instinct, without a guide, and without the traces of a footstep before him. But when he is to be brought back he needs a thousand arguments, and instruction in a thousand forms. It is not enough to hold up before him the pure and plain directions of the law, even though it be enforced with all that is glorious in its rewards, and all that is awful in its penalties. He shrinks from these holy requisitions, as if they were a thing as impossible to be performed as they are discordant with his feelings. He needs to see the excellence of the law, and the beauty of obedience, moving, as it were, before him in some living form, and thus provoking him to admire, to love, to imitate. Hence it is that the holy deportment, the constant, active, exemplary piety of Christians is of so much importance, so indispensable to the successful preaching of the word. Hence it is that the godliness of an individual

believer so often diffuses itself over the whole church with which he is united. Hence it is that the biography of eminent saints becomes so useful. The recorded piety of DAVID BRAINERD has called forth to the most perilous service of the church such men as MARTYN and PARSONS; while many a female spirit has kindled with the mild yet fervent devotion of HARRIET NEWEL. And hence it is that God has given us the example of his SON, to be the model of our character, and the aim of all our efforts.

But the wisdom of this provision, and its importance as a means of moral culture, appear more strikingly, when we reflect that God has thus given for our model an example of nothing less than *absolute perfection*. For such an example is of all others best adapted to the wants and to the character of our nature. Such is the infirmity of man, that without some palpable display of pure and absolute perfection, his notions of moral excellence which he might attain must have always been comparatively inadequate and indistinct. And such is the character of man, that in all things the higher he aspires the more complete is his success; and whatever may be the pursuit in which he engages with all his soul, the highest models of which his mind can fashion the distinct conception will be the standard of his efforts. And therefore God, to aid men in their efforts after moral excellence, holds out before them for their imitation the example of his own Son—elevated, pure, and perfect.

We see, then, that in the life of Jesus Christ the law of God has been embodied and exemplified. A perfect example has been presented; an example of practicable holiness, and adapted for universal imitation; an example which constitutes one of the most important means of moral culture which infinite wisdom has ever afforded. The subject thus considered admits of many important applications.

1. And first, it may be applied to illustrate the *moral perverseness* of mankind. There is in man's native character, as moralists have often observed, a disposition to excel in every attainment which he deems worthy of high admiration. To whatever pursuit an individual devotes himself with all his energies, in that pursuit he is ever making progress, and while aught of excellence remains before him, he feels a longing discontent which urges him for ever onward. He who has determined to be truly great in any department of excellence, sets before his mind the highest standard of attainment, and never rests till he has equalled, or if it be not absolutely perfect, has surpassed it. As it was with the orator of ancient times, who studied all the examples of eloquence that were before him, and resolving to surpass them all, formed to himself, by the imagined combination of their various excellence, the conception of "something immense and infinite;" and then made this ideal image of perfection the standard of his efforts;—just so it is with men in every department in which they strive for excellence. The instances have often been collected and described. The scholar looks forth exultingly over the fields which he resolves to traverse, and, measuring the strides

of the great examples who have gone before, his spirit cries, "I will surpass them." The artist studies the noblest specimens;—he travels, it may be, to distant countries, that, having seen the most exalted models, he may be enabled by long effort to excel them all. And so the youthful poet, impelled by his own kindling aspirations, turns over with a feverish emulation those productions which have won the admiration of every age. Now, bear in mind this principle of human nature, this disposition to excel, this longing after the perfect and the infinite,—remember that for eighteen hundred years there has been held forth before the sons of men, expressly for their imitation, a high and perfect exhibition of *moral* excellence; a specimen of the only excellence which God approves; a specimen which all, in every condition, may make their standard;—and when you have seen how few have been persuaded or provoked to imitation, and how faint and inconstant have been, for the most part, the efforts of those few;—then tell me, if you have not seen a most impressive illustration of the perverseness of man's moral nature, and the supineness of all his moral faculties. And if it be a fact, that this example has been familiar to *your* mind from infancy, and yet has never won your fervent love or roused in you the effectual resolution to resemble it; can you not read in such a fact *your own* perverseness?—and must not such perverseness be a fearful omen of your destiny?

2. The example of Christ may be applied as a test of Christian character. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Here is the standard of Christian character; here the simple and obvious test by which all pretensions to Christian character must be settled. A man may have his frames, and talk much about his experiences, and yet be no Christian. A man may be exceedingly well informed on the doctrines of religion, and his contemplations may ravish him with their sublimity, or dissolve his spirit in emotions of tenderness, while yet he is no Christian. A man may be liberal in his contributions to objects of public utility, and his name may stand in capitals on the catalogue of those who are the benefactors of their country or the benefactors of the church, while yet he is no Christian. But that man who follows in the steps of Jesus, whose character is modelled after his image, who leads a life of meekness and patience and self-denial, and toil and benevolence and prayer, such as were seen in the life of Christ;—that man, and that man only, is a Christian. He whose connection with Jesus is seen, not only in his profession, not only at the table of his Lord, or in the house of God, or in the meeting for devotion; not only in now and then a single act of benevolence, or now and then a sudden flight of ardent feeling; but more than all, in the tenor of his every-day deportment—he who *walketh* even as Christ walked—he it is whom Christ will own as his disciple. To know him, therefore, you must go into his family, and into his place of solitary prayer; you must follow him to his business; you must hear him speak, not only when he is on his guard, and when religion is distinctly set before him, but when he mingles among men, and when in the current of remark his thoughts

flow out without restraint; you must see what are his schemes, his hopes; what is the object of his toils; and you must think the while, how all these things would look if they were set down as a chapter in the life of Jesus Christ. If you see the love of money; if you see the pride of life; if you see the heart and the hand fast closed against the calls of benevolence; if you see any passion unrestrained;—anger, or envy, or pride, or levity; if you see a spirit that delights in tales of scandal, or a spirit that complains and murmurs and is restless; if you see any of these things, how can it be that this man is a follower of Christ? How can he be a Christian, if he cannot stand the test of Christian character?

Now try this test yourself. Suppose you should live one whole day *exactly* as Christ lived: how would that day compare with the ordinary days of your life? Would it be a day for the suspension of your customary pursuits and of your wonted enjoyments? If so, then the conclusion is too obvious to be mistaken. Try the test again. Where have you been during the past week, and what have you done? If Christ had gone with you wherever you went; if he had stood by you to hear whatever you said, and to witness all your actions; would not he have been ashamed of you; and would not you have been ashamed to have him look upon you! He *was* with you, though you saw him not. If you forgot his presence, he did not forget you. He saw you:—and did he see you *walking even as he walked*? If he did not, how are you his disciple? Be not deceived. You may have many goodly frames, and may speak many goodly words about your own inward conflicts; and yet be none of his. You may know much about his gospel, and admire the splendor of eternal things; and yet be none of his. You may perform from time to time many an occasional act of devotion or of benevolence; and yet be none of his. If you are his, you will *so walk even as he walked*. Be not deceived; for God is not deceived. Be not deceived; if you *have not the spirit of Christ, you are none of his*.

3. Once more: The example of Christ may be applied to illustrate the condition and the duty of degenerate Christians. It illustrates their condition. Professing to be in Christ, they have wandered from the path in which he walked. They have engaged in pursuits, in which, if he had been engaged, they know it would have been pollution to his character. They have indulged desires and passions, which, if he had indulged, they know he never could have been "the Lamb of God." They have neglected to commune with God. They have worshipped money, which is the god of this world. They have grasped after vanity, and labored for that which satisfieth not. Thus, heavenly desires, devout affections, godlike aspirations, have died away within them. They now sustain a cold and inconsistent profession, which is a heavy burthen to their souls, and under which they live uneasy and unsatisfied. This is their condition. They have wandered from that path in which the Savior trod, and in which the company of his redeemed have followed on to glory; they have wandered from that path on which the light of

God's countenance beams always like the morning, and in which duty and enjoyment, purity and blessed hope, go hand in hand. What then is their duty? What, but to return without delay? What, but to renounce immediately every pursuit, every affection, every passion, which is inconsistent with the example of Christ? What, but to act, from this moment, in all circumstances, just as conscience says that Jesus would have acted?

Rise, then, cold, degenerate, dead believer; lay aside every weight and the sins that do so easily beset thee, and run with patience the race that is set before thee, **LOOKING UNTO JESUS.**

“ My dear Redeemer, and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy word;
But in thy life the law appears,
Drawn out in living characters.

Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal,
Such deference to thy Father's will,—
Thy love and meekness so divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine.

Cold mountains, and the midnight air,
Witness'd the fervor of thy prayer:
The desert thy temptations knew,
Thy conflict, and thy victory too.

Be thou my pattern; make me bear
More of thy gracious image here;
Then God, the Judge, shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb.”

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXXIX.

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By ASHBEL GREEN, D.D. LL.D.

PHILADELPHIA.

THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE TRUTH.

PSALM CXIX. 130.—*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.*

In these words the inspired Psalmist describes the efficacy of revealed truth on the human mind. He affirms that the entrance of it gives light and understanding even to the simple. In this instance, as in many others, experience and observation confirm, what revelation declares. Men of inferior natural powers, or of little learning, are frequently seen to obtain, by a diligent perusal of the Sacred Scriptures, a far better knowledge of God, of true religion, and of sound morality, than is ever acquired by the ablest philosopher, or the most erudite scholar, who rejects revelation. Thus it is shown by obvious facts, that the entrance of God's word introduces into the mind light, or knowledge, of the most important kind. Its effect is much like that which strikes us when we let sun-beams into a dark apartment: to which, indeed, there seems to be an allusion in the text.

As not only light, but understanding also, is here mentioned, we may remark that this latter word, in the language of Scripture, and by the Psalmist himself, is sometimes put for moral qualities, as well as for intellectual attainments. In the Psalm before us, the term appears to be several times used, so as at least to include this sense. We may therefore consider the writer, not merely as repeating or explaining, in the second member of the sentence, what he had affirmed in the first; but as distinctly referring, in the term understanding, to the sanctifying influence of the word of God. Such an influence we certainly know that word often has. "Sanctify them through thy truth," said the Saviour, "thy word is truth:" and David himself elsewhere declares, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

It is however important to remember, that the divine word itself possesses no saving influence, until it is effectually applied to the conscience, and to the heart, by the same Holy Spirit by whom it was at first indited. Still, it is His own *written*, revealed truth, which the Spirit uses for this

purpose ; and which, for this very reason, is called, "the sword of the Spirit."

It appears, then, that the divine word is productive of two most salutary effects on the human kind ; the first on the *understanding*, the second on the *heart*. The first introduces the light of *knowledge*, the second the lustre of *holiness*. The one makes us *wise*, the other makes us *good*. This may suffice for the general explanation of the text.

But it may be proper farther to premise, that revealed truth may gain an entrance into the mind, by several modes or methods of introduction. Sometimes by reading or hearing it attentively, just as it is recorded in the Bible ; sometimes by listening to it when faithfully preached—since preaching is nothing more than declaring, explaining, and enforcing the truths of Scripture ; sometimes by reading pious books—by which means revealed truth is admitted by the eye, as in preaching it is communicated by the ear ; sometimes by catechetical instruction, and familiar conversation ; by which, not only children, and the heathen, but the unimformed generally, may most advantageously be imbued with the life-giving truths of the sacred oracles.

In all these ways then, or by all these means, the word of God is made to enter, both into the understanding and the hearts of men. Words are but the arbitrary signs of thought—the vehicle by which truth and knowledge are communicated : and by whatever words, or other intelligible signs, they are communicated, if the leading ideas, the principal facts, doctrines, and information of Holy Scripture, are clearly presented to the view of the mind, light is introduced ; and, under the influence of divine grace, the heart may be transformed and rendered holy.

I shall now proceed to show, in two or three particulars, how the text has been, and still is, verified in fact—verified in producing both the effects to which we consider it as having reference.

1. By the entrance of revealed truth into the world, all the just knowledge of God, and of our duty to him, which has ever existed among mankind, has been imparted. The Deity manifested himself, and made known his will to our first parents, at their creation in innocence. By the fall they lost the moral image of their Maker ; but they certainly did not lose all speculative knowledge of his being and attributes. This knowledge they must, in some good degree, have retained ; and there can be no reasonable doubt that they imparted it, as fully as they could, to their descendants. Without this traditionary revealed information, some have maintained that the posterity of Adam never could have had any idea whatever of a spirit, nor any right notions of a Supreme Being. The advocates of this opinion must of course believe, that the apostle Paul presupposes this traditionary revelation to have reached all mankind, when he says—"The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are

made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." Be this as it may, the truth is, as the apostle asserts, that "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" and therefore—the aid of tradition notwithstanding—they lost all just and accurate conceptions of the true God, and of their duty to him. For it is a fact beyond reasonable controversy, that there is not now, and within the memory of history there never was, a people, who were not given up to gross idolatry, or totally ignorant of God, and destitute of all religious worship, except those who have manifestly been saved from this dreadful state of ignorance and error, by the light of revelation. Yes—this Holy Bible is demonstrably the sun of the moral system. Take it from any people, and that people is in darkness; take it from the world, and the world is blind. "God said let there be light, and there was light."—It is as true of revelation, as of the radiance that beamed upon chaos. "The entrance of thy word" into the world "giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." It enlightens, elevates, and purifies society, wherever it is introduced.

2. The text is often remarkably verified in men, who are at length induced to attend carefully to the revealed will of God, after having long neglected or refused to show it regard. The entrance of divine truth into their minds, brings light into their understandings, and holiness into their hearts.

As truth and light resemble each other in many respects, so in this, that all their benefits may be refused and lost, by those who are placed in the midst of them. A man may madly put out his own eyes, or he may wilfully shut them when surrounded by the splendours of noon-day: and so, in regard to spiritual things, men may "love darkness rather than light;" and may close their minds against the effulgence of gospel day, while it is shining all around them. In both cases, indeed, the exclusion is commonly not so complete as to prevent all consciousness that light is present; but still it is such as to prevent the distinct vision of any object.

My Brethren, it is a melancholy fact, often witnessed, that men live a great part of their lives, and sometimes the whole of life, among Christian institutions and privileges of every kind—among Bibles, and sabbaths, and sermons, and sacraments, and religious books, and religious conversation—and, after all, these men have scarcely any more distinct and definite knowledge of the great truths of religion, than a man blind from his birth has of colours.—Of the moral glory of the revealed system they are as totally without ideas as the blind man is of the beauty of an exquisite painting. They may have heard others speak of it with delight; but perceptions of their own they have absolutely none.

Now let us suppose, that one who has been thus accustomed to neglect the contents of the Sacred Volume, is at length roused, by whatever

cause, to inquire into them, diligently and perseveringly. Such a man will experience and exemplify the truth of the text, in a striking and wonderful manner. He will himself be surprised to find how light is poured in upon his mind. One new perception after another he will rapidly gain, of spiritual and eternal realities—of the truths which God has revealed; of the requisitions he has made; of the doctrines he has taught; of the duties he has enjoined; of the hopes and expectations he has set before us; of the reasonableness of his commands; of the sinfulness and awful danger of disobeying them; and of the importance and the ineffably happy consequences of yielding to them a cordial obedience. These things will excite and interest him deeply; and every addition of light will only make him solicitous to obtain more. He will perceive some difficulties, and he will be greatly anxious to have them explained and removed. Hence he will read more, and with more care and closeness. He will reflect and meditate much, and listen earnestly to all discourse on the subject of religion. The preaching of the word, conversation with judicious and candid Christians, and the perusal of well written treatises on the chief points of doctrinal and practical piety, will be sources of knowledge and improvement which he will highly prize, and to which he will zealously resort. In pursuing this course, one obscurity after another will be removed; one difficulty after another will vanish; the beauty and fair proportions of the revealed system will begin to rise to his view; and he will have no small sense both of astonishment and shame, that he should have passed so much of his life with these important objects offered to his consideration, and yet that he should never have known what they were till now.

It must not be overlooked, that, long before the process which we have been tracing has reached the point to which we have carried it, he who has been concerned in it will have begun to pray. He cannot have gone half the length to which we have followed him, without much and very earnest prayer. He will have seen something of his guilt, and misery, and danger; and he will have cried to God for mercy and forgiveness. He will also have felt his ignorance, and blindness, and absolute dependence, and will have asked counsel, and help, and direction from on high. He will have entreated importunately for divine aid; and, although he may not have been very sensible of it at the time, he will have received this aid. God shines on his word in answer to prayer, and the word becomes luminous. Then, emphatically, the entrance of his word gives light, and understanding, and guidance to the benighted soul.

Brethren, it is not easy for me to say—it is not easy, nor perhaps practicable for any one to say—how far the train of exercises we have considered, may go on, while as yet the understanding only has been entered by the light of truth, and the heart in no degree changed—while the

man is only better instructed, and not in any measure renewed.—I say it is not easy, and I am sure it is not necessary, to ascertain and mark the precise confines of illumination and regeneration. It is clear, that there is a difference between knowledge and sanctification, and it is very important to make and keep up the distinction; but it is not important to know exactly the limits and boundaries of each. Men are enlightened before they are sanctified; but they are still more enlightened after they are sanctified; and when the mind is passing from knowledge to holiness, who shall draw the line and say—all on this side was mere speculation, or the exercise of intellect only; but on that side the affections followed the dictates of the understanding, and the heart was formed to holiness.

But let us more distinctly consider how the text is verified, in the renovation of a sinner, through the instrumentality of revealed truth—Through the *instrumentality* of truth, I repeat it; for it must never be lost sight of, that revealed truth itself, is only the instrument by which the Holy Spirit, as the great efficient Agent, transforms the human heart. What is strictly denominated regeneration, is, indeed, represented in Scripture as a new creation, and consequently as the effect of Almighty power, and it may be made a question, whether, in this, any secondary cause is, or can be employed. Be this as it may—and for myself, I am not fond of refining much in regard to a change, which the sure word of revelation tells us is produced, like the effects of the wind, by an invisible and inexplicable, but yet a resistless Agent—it is not to be questioned, that knowledge, in adult age, usually precedes renovation, and always follows it; and that the first actings of the new born soul are ever put forth in the view of some divine truth, by which those actings seem to be prompted, and on which they centre. It is however by no means to be understood, that the mind *always* opens to the reception of truth, exactly in the same manner. The statement which has been given, is to be considered but as the exhibition of an individual case, taken for the purpose of illustration. There is great variety and diversity, in the manner in which men are enlightened and renewed. Many also there are, who acquire no inconsiderable share of religious knowledge; and yet, so far as we can judge, it never has a lasting influence on their hearts. For years in succession, they read and study the Bible, in much the same manner as they do any other book of science, and with no more than a similar effect. The knowledge they acquire is only intellectual. If their affections are occasionally a little moved, the current of them is never changed. Thus they live—and thus, alas! we have reason to fear, they die—well read in the Scriptures, but never savingly profited by them.—From this fearful issue, even learned critics and commentators on the sacred volume may not be exempted. Others, who receive saving benefit from the word of God, make a much more rapid advance in know-

ledge than that of which the detail has been given : and others again, appear to have their hearts touched, almost as soon as divine truth dawns on their intellectual powers.

Holiness, nevertheless, is, in all cases, connected with the perception and love of what God has revealed in his holy word. The process here, as in that which relates to the understanding, is various ; but it may be illustrated in a single instance, thus :—While the truths of Scripture are in the view of the mind, and the person concerned is pondering and musing upon them, he becomes—perhaps he knows not at the time, how or why—but so it is, he becomes greatly pleased and affected with these truths. Objections to them which he had long felt, have now all vanished ; risings of heart against them are all gone ; obscurities that veiled them, have given place to clear and most impressive views of their reality, importance, and excellence ; so that while he contemplates these truths, his mind approves and assents to them, with all its powers ; and their practical importance also—the importance of having his heart and life confirmed to them—is most sensibly perceived. He therefore looks to God for assistance, and resolves to attempt this conformity.

The man whose case we are here considering has learned from his Bible the evil of sin ; and he now finds that he is chargeable with it in every act of his life, and that its pollution has reached to every part and power of his nature. He sees himself to be unspeakably guilty and vile ; and he is humbled, and mourns, and abases himself, and repents in dust and ashes. But his Bible tells him that there is salvation for sinners, although their guilt be of a crimson colour and a scarlet die : that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became a Substitute for sinners, and perfectly obeyed the law of God, and endured, in all its extent, the penalty of that law in their behalf ; and that any convinced and humbled sinner, even if he be the very chief of sinners, may now be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and saved, by trusting in this blessed, and all-sufficient Saviour, who freely offers himself to the guilty, and even commands them to come to him and receive salvation ; and that God may, in this way, be glorified and honoured in their eternal salvation, more than in their condemnation and everlasting perdition. In the view of these glorious Bible truths, the man whom we contemplate, is filled with gratitude, admiration, and delight ; and his soul is joyfully carried out to Christ, in faith, and trust, and love, making him “all in all—the chief among ten thousand, and one altogether lovely.”

He who is thus brought to the Saviour, will, as the natural consequence, have great and augmented pleasure, in reading, hearing, and meditating on all the doctrines and truths of Holy Scripture, that he may apply them all to himself ; that he may learn his whole duty both to God and man,—that, in a word, he may continually grow wiser and better.

and be taught how in all things he may glorify the God and Saviour, who has "called him out of darkness into marvellous light."

In something like this manner it is, that the word of God, in the hand of the Spirit, turns the soul from sin to holiness; vitally unites it to Christ; and renders it a partaker of all the benefits of his great salvation.

3. The declaration of the text, as it relates both to knowledge and to holiness, is remarkably verified in the practical Christian, through the whole of his life. The entrance of the divine word gives him more and more light; makes him increase both in knowledge and sanctification, till he enters into the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Nay, we have reason to believe, that saints in glory, will understand their Bible better than they ever did on earth; for there they will see clearly many things referred to in divine revelation, which here they saw "through a glass darkly;" and their capacity for understanding the things of God will there be so enlarged, that their comprehension of them will exceed that of their present state, as much as the intelligence of manhood exceeds the few and feeble conceptions of infancy.

In the mean time, the people of God, while passing through this state of pupilage and discipline, this vale of tears, are continually instructed and edified, made to know their duty, to grow in grace, and to abound in divine consolation, by a constant resort to the sacred volume. After reading and hearing its truth a hundred and a thousand times, those truths are still new.—A new beauty is seen in them, and new directions, support and encouragement are drawn from them, to the very last. The facts, doctrines, precepts, promises, warnings, reproofs and threatenings, of God's holy word, are, at different times, seen in new views, and felt with a new force and influence; and substantial improvement in knowledge and holiness is the uniform and happy result. Brethren, I call you to witness, that there are seasons in the life of the practical Christian, at which, by reading a passage or portion of sacred Scripture, or by hearing it discoursed on from the pulpit, or by finding its illustration in a book, or by meditating upon it in private, some precious truth comes to the mind with a flood of new light; and this truth is, at the same time, set home on the heart, with such a power and sweetness as is literally inexpressible. Then is the happy Christian prepared to say with emphasis, "The entrance of thy words giveth light;" or with Peter on the mount, "It is good to be here;" or with the author of our text in another Psalm, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Well may the Christian believer highly prize, as he always will, these delightful seasons of light, and enlargement, and sacred pleasure, and look for them, and pray for them earnestly, in reading, and hearing, and meditating on the word of God.

Nor am I willing to close this discussion, without a repeated notice of the well known fact mentioned at the entrance, that unlettered Christians.

who have scarcely read another book beside the Bible, do sometimes, by great familiarity with that, become so expert in all subjects of practical piety and morality, as to be able to confound and put to shame, those who have read ever so much, if they have left unread, or unremembered, the volume of inspiration.

Thus have we seen how extensively and wonderfully the text is verified—"The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." From what has been said we may remark,—

1. On the folly and wickedness of infidels, in their endeavours to discredit the Bible, and to banish it from the world. Their attempt is no other than to blot out the Sun of our moral system. But blessed be God, their effort is just as vain as would be an attempt to blot out the sun which shines in the firmament of heaven. Both are the work of the same God, and both equally beyond the reach of injury from puny mortals. The beams of both may be partially obstructed in their course; but their fountain remains unimpaired, and will shine on, and illumine the rest of the world, in despite of all the rage, and all the efforts of those, who "hate the light because their deeds are evil."

Could the wishes and attempts of infidels succeed, they would throw the whole human race back into all the darkness and horrors of heathen idolatry; into an utter ignorance of the true God, and of the worship which he requires; and an utter uncertainty of a future state of existence. There is in these attempts a wanton cruelty, which it is not easy to characterize as it deserves. Wretched and hard hearted men! Why will you seek to rob the miserable, of every name, of the best alleviation of all their sufferings? Why will you attempt to deprive some of the excellent of the earth of that which constitutes their highest happiness? Infidels usually avoid our assemblies, and in speaking as I do, I am perfectly aware that what I say is not likely to strike the ear of one of their order. Nor do I seek, Christian brethren, to stir you up to hate or persecute these men. No verily; but I would stir you up to pity them, to pray for them, and with Christian zeal, mingled with meekness, to labour, in every proper way, for their conversion: and I would stir you up to guard the young and the unwary against their arts and their delusions; as against a moral pestilence, poisonous to the very vitals of social happiness, and leading to all the horrors of the second death.

2. From the subject and the discussion to which your attention has been invited, we may see the importance of Bible translations, Bible societies, Missionary operations, Tract societies, and Sabbath schools. These have all the same object. They all co-operate to diffuse the light and influence of revealed truth. If I might characterize them from the metaphor furnished by our text, I would say, that the translators of the Bible are preparing lamps, or torches, fitted to enlighten all the dark

parts of the earth ; that Bible societies are forming magazines of these lamps, to be distributed, by sale or donation, in every place, and to every individual that needs them ; that Missionaries are intrusted to carry these lamps abroad, that those who want may obtain them readily for themselves,—and that the missionaries are themselves torch-bearers, throwing light into every dark path and corner of the world ; that Tracts are tapers, lighted at these lamps, and distributed gratuitously, inducing men, by their manifest utility, to seek for the lamp itself, and in the mean time enabling them to avoid the pit of perdition, and to turn their footsteps into the path of life ; and that Sabbath schools are so many moral infirmaries for the blind, into which innumerable children and many adults are kindly received, to have their blindness removed, and their eyes opened on that glorious light “ which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The operations and institutions which we here contemplate, are the glory of the age in which we live ; and the man or woman who does not take some part in promoting them, is not worthy of the name of a Christian.

3. Our subject shows the importance of carefully reading and hearing the word of God, and of accompanying both with much and earnest prayer for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

Those who neglect the perusal of the Holy Scriptures and the preaching of the gospel, are regardless of the ordinary means which God has appointed for their salvation. We do not deny that they may be arrested and brought to consideration, in some very extraordinary way ; but the hazard of this is fearful beyond expression. It is to risk eternal happiness or misery, on an appalling improbability : and what is this, but the very madness of human folly ? “ Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God :” and to the word of God every soul under the light of the gospel, must at last be brought ; or its everlasting perdition is as sure as its existence. O that this were duly considered, by those in Christian communities who seldom open a Bible, and as seldom appear in a place of public worship, or hear, on any occasion, the preaching of the gospel.

But it is also of unspeakable importance to keep in mind, that even reading and hearing are not likely to be attended with a saving efficacy, if they are not accompanied with earnest prayer. Alas ! we have reason to believe, that the neglect of prayer for the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to give impression to his own truth, is the great cause, that by multitudes its influence is never felt ; or if felt at all, is speedily dissipated and lost. Could we persuade men never to open the Bible without sincere and ardent aspirations of soul, for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Spirit on the portion to be read, and never to close it without similar aspirations for a blessing on what has been read—and could we engage them in the like devotional exercises in their closets,

before and after every sermon they hear—O! brethren, if we could effect this, be assured it would not be long before we should see converts multiplying like drops of the morning dew; and professing Christians manifesting a growth in grace, most comfortable to themselves, most ornamental to religion, and most influential in promoting the cause of God in the world. To produce such an effect, let us withhold no effort in our power; and let us remember, that among the means to be used, none will be more important than to exemplify in ourselves, what we recommend to others.

4. Finally—This subject affords instruction and admonition to preachers of the gospel.

In much that has already been addressed to Christians in general, we who are ministers of the gospel, have more than a common interest; since to us it is peculiarly important to realize in our own souls, what we urge upon our hearers; and because it is also especially incumbent on us to take the lead in every measure, and every effort, to diffuse the light of the gospel, among those who are yet groping in the darkness of ignorance and sin.

But there is yet another, and a more exclusive application of this subject to us, as preachers of the gospel. It is summarily this—that in preaching, we look well that it be revealed truth, and that only, which we deliver to the people; and that we be much engaged in prayer for the influences of the Holy Spirit, to render effectual all that we address to our fellow-sinners.

Dear Brethren—If we rightly estimate our character as ambassadors of Christ, we shall never go into the sacred desk to deliver discourses on philosophy, or to exhibit specimens of eloquence, or samples of elegant composition. We shall be absorbed by the desire to make the truths of God's holy word enter both the understandings and the hearts of our hearers. Eyeing this great object, we shall avoid every process of abstract reasoning, and sacrifice every ornament of style, and forbear every attempt at oratory, that would hinder, and not help us, in reaching the point at which we aim. We shall use such plainness and simplicity of language and manner, that if any of our audience do not understand and profit by what we say, theirs and not ours shall be the fault. We shall, in a word, preach, in our humble measure, as Paul did—"not with enticing words of man's wisdom,—not in the words that man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

From the time of Paul to our own, there has been too much of "man's wisdom," in his sense of the phrase, in preaching the gospel—too much of it, not only in language and manner, but really in attempts to be wiser than the book of God—wiser than the teachings of the Holy Ghost. I will freely state what I take to be one example of this. It

seems to me, and so it has seemed to all the best expositors of Scripture, of whom I have any knowledge, that the Bible is replete with the doctrine of substitution, or imputation; that the whole Mosaic ritual taught this doctrine, and was in a great measure founded upon it; and that the same is taught by the inspired writers of the New Testament in as plain language as they could use. But no—say some—the thing is impossible. It is impossible that either guilt or righteousness should ever be imputed. They are in their own nature personal qualities, and they never can be transferred from one party to another; one party can never be a substitute for another, in relation to these qualities. Now, to this I answer in the words of Paul, in relation to a doctrine far more mysterious than that of substitution;—“Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God?” Show me, if you can, that the word of God does not, by a fair construction, teach this doctrine. While you attempt this, I shall listen to you. But I will not listen, for a single moment, to your reasonings against that word; for I know that human reason, however plausible, is often fallacious; but that God can neither err nor deceive. If he has spoken clearly—reason as you may—he and not you must be believed. Yes, and away, too, with all torturing of that blessed word, with a view to make it say something, which, in its plain import, it does not say—that thus it may be forced into an alliance with a favourite system.

Brethren, let us go and sit down, like little children, at the feet of our divine Master, and take our system of doctrines, in the first place, from him alone. We will reason on them afterwards; we will reason on them all; and we will make them square with our reasons, as far as we can; and when we can go no farther, we will believe Him, and distrust ourselves. Do not say that this is to act blindfold in the matter of religion. It is not. We are neither infidels nor sceptics. We have already satisfied ourselves that God does verily speak to us in the Bible; and if so, we know that all he has there told us is consistent with the most perfect reason, although we cannot always trace it fully. On this very account it is that we ought to prefer what he says, before any of the deductions or conclusions of fallible human intellect: that is, we ought to resolve to follow an infallible guide, rather than a fallible one; and if this is not a rational resolve, let any one tell us how such a resolve may be formed.

Apart from the guidance and authority of revelation, sure I am, that if we could reason better than Locke, or Butler, or Edwards, or Reed—yea, if we could reason with the powers of an angel, instead of those of a man,—we should never be able to reason a single sinner out of his sins, and persuade him into faith in Christ and love to God. The truths of Holy Scripture, plainly stated and powerfully urged, are those only from which we can look for this effect; because every thing in this great concern depends on God's blessing; and it is his plan and purpose ordi-

narily to bless only the truths of his own word. They and they only give light and understanding to the simple. While these truths are clearly spoken, and forcibly and tenderly pressed, "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," makes them shine into the hearts of men, "to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Be it our care, therefore, dear brethren, to preach these truths in simplicity and godly sincerity, unadulterated by any fancies of our own, unmixed with the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God:—Then may we hope that he will give them an effectual entrance into the understanding of our hearers, and a transforming influence on their hearts.

Especially may we hope for this blessed fruit of our labours, if we accompany faithful gospel preaching with many and earnest supplications for those influences of the Holy Spirit, under which alone, as we well know, the truth itself becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. If it be, as has been shown, the duty of every reader and hearer of the word, to pray for a blessing on it, both before and after he reads and hears it—how much prayer—fervent effectual prayer—ought every minister of the gospel to offer up to the prayer-hearing God, for a divine blessing on every sermon that he prepares and delivers. Luther's maxim was certainly a just one; that "to pray well is to study well." O brethren! let every text we select for the theme of a sermon be chosen with prayer. Let every sermon we study be mingled with constant prayer. In prayer, let us dedicate and commend it to God, before we preach it: and in prayer, let us cry to God for his blessing on it after we have preached it. In special seasons of prayer, sometimes accompanied with fasting, let us earnestly entreat the Spirit of all grace to seal his own truth on the hearts and consciences of our hearers: and let us do all this in faith and hope, with a deep sense of our own nothingness—remembering that "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." *AMEN.*

SERMON XL.

BY AUSTIN DICKINSON, A. M.

NEW-YORK.

RIGHT USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.—*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.*

WHEN a letter is received from a far distant friend, or from any person of acknowledged excellence, we are sure to open and read it in good earnest. If it bring tidings that some eminent benefactor of our

nation and the world has fallen by wicked hands ; or that sudden destruction and overwhelming disgrace await our own family ; we read it with increasing earnestness. And if it bear every mark of truth and benevolence, our interest is not diminished, though an air of mystery may hang over some parts of it. What language then can express the apathy, not to say the guilt, of those, who acknowledge the Bible, with all its grand announcements and rich provisions, to be from God, and yet treat it with carelessness or neglect ? If this book of God was completed nearly eighteen hundred years ago ; and if, as would seem from the closing chapter, no further communication is to come forth from Heaven till the consummation of all things,—if this one Volume is to be our only directory through this world of sin and death, and our only passport to life beyond the grave—how immeasurably important is it, that we use this one Volume aright. For it is not every kind of familiarity with the Bible, that is able to make men *wise unto salvation*. But, on the contrary, it is a most affecting consideration, that a man may be a giant in theology, and may, with its solemn truths, command the breathless attention of sinners like himself, and yet be damned after all. Surely then, it well becomes men to inquire, with what feelings they should consult these Holy Oracles. In considering this inquiry, we remark,

First ; Read the Bible under an affecting sense of the goodness of God, in thus deigning to communicate with you by his written word.

This blessed book, sent down from God out of Heaven, contains all that men know of the true God, of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and of that eternity which stretches before us. This blessed book unfolds our ruined condition, and is the grand charter of all our spiritual rights and privileges, and of all our hopes. If then there be any value in such knowledge and such privileges, while you read, let your *gratitude* ascend up continually to the Author and Giver of the Bible. In the daily enjoyment of this light of revelation, we are apt, from the commonness of the blessing, to forget our infinite obligations to the Giver ; in the same manner that we fail to appreciate the privilege of that sun which daily moves in grandeur through the heavens. But blot the sun from the firmament, and what would be the condition of our world ! So, blot out the Bible, and who can tell the horror of that night, which must hang over the everlasting destinies of us all ! Read the Bible, then, with gratitude to its Heavenly Author.

Secondly ; Read the Bible under a deep sense of your inability at once to comprehend it.

Though the most essential truths of the Bible are plain ; and though, by prayerful diligence, we may learn enough of the Scriptures to make us *wise unto salvation* ; still, it must be confessed with humility, that in them *are some things hard to be understood*, and many things which we

cannot yet fully comprehend. Let no one be startled at this, as though it were a vain thing for God to have given us a Bible above our immediate comprehension. Does not the kind parent present his child a book even before he understands its alphabet? There must be a beginning and a gradual progress of improvement in the Book of divine knowledge, as well as in books of human science. On this point experience confirms what analogy suggests. The student who consults his Bible by day and by night, finds its channels of knowledge widening and deepening the farther he advances. And whatever current of divine truth he pursues, he finds it expanding into a boundless ocean of intelligence. And could he live to the age of Methuselah, and be all the while exploring the Sacred Volume with the penetration of an angel's mind, I apprehend he would still exclaim, with increasing wonder and delight, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* If every passage furnishes a theme for a sermon—or rather for an hundred sermons, had we strength to write them—what mind of man shall be found worthy to open the book and loose all the seals thereof? Take, for instance, one of the most simple passages; *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* The little child can commit it to memory in a moment; and the little child may think he understands it. But what mind of mortal can fully realize what it is to *see God?*—what it is to *see as we are seen, and know as we are known?*—what it is to look on the glorious countenance of that Being, whose presence fills immensity, and *from whose face the earth and the heavens flee away!* Take another very simple passage of Scripture; *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The little child can commit it to memory; and may think he understands it. But what mind of man or angel can comprehend the full amount of blessedness here promised to the poor in spirit? What tongue of archangel can describe the extent, and majesty, and grandeur, and beauty, of that kingdom of heaven, where Jehovah's glory is peculiarly displayed—where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof—and where the thousand thousands who encircle the throne, or who go forth on errands of mercy, are all arrayed in the splendour and likeness of their King! Let us, then, be looking into this holy Volume under a very humbling sense of our inability fully to comprehend it.

Thirdly; Read the Bible with constant self-examination and self-application.

If we would improve our own hearts, as well as heads, we must read and hear for ourselves, and not for another. If then we read, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;* we should at once inquire, *Whether we do not come under that curse?* and how we are likely to escape? If we read, *Honour thy father and mother;* we should quickly inquire, *Whether we have not often*

offended Heaven by unkindness to earthly parents? If we read, *Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment*; we should solemnly ask, Are we in no danger from the condemnations of the heart-searching Judge? If we read, *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*; we should pause and consider, Whether we have not a thousand times broken that holy command? O, my fellow-sinners, if we read this holy Book with any degree of faithfulness to ourselves, we shall find, that in almost every page we are damned for ever;—unless the great God can be induced to revoke his threatenings—or unless there be some Substitute for the punishment of the transgressors. But the unchanging God never will revoke his threatenings—no, never—though the foundations of the earth be removed, or though the pillars of heaven be shaken. For *heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away. Not one jot or tittle shall pass from his law, till all be fulfilled.* Condemned, then, as we all are, by the eternal law of God, we should anxiously look along the Bible to ascertain, what Substitute there may be for the punishment of the guilty—what escape for sinners from impending wrath. And if we find, that the Lord Jesus Christ has come down from heaven, and died for the chief of sinners—if we find that his *blood cleanseth from all sin*; we should still ask ourselves, Whether we have accepted an *interest* in his blood? whether we have received him into our hearts, with that *faith which works by love*? For, notwithstanding the stupendous sacrifice of Calvary, we still know, that, without a *living faith* which *purifies the heart*, it is *impossible to please God*. Thus, would we possess that *hope which maketh not ashamed*, we must read the Scriptures with constant self-examination and self-application.

Fourthly; Read the Bible with fervent supplication for the special influences of the Spirit.

Would you *discern spiritual things*; there must be *an unction from the Holy One*. Would you experience renewing grace, and become partakers of that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*; it must be through the instrumentality of divine truth, carried home to the conscience and heart by the agency of God's Spirit. Other means may *awaken* the sinner: but no other will convert the soul. A terrific burst of thunder may *awaken* the sinner. The convulsion of an earthquake may *awaken* the sinner. A blazing meteor of night, crossing the heavens, may *awaken* the sinner. Or the thrilling voice of a loud preacher may *awaken* the sinner. But no thunder, no earthquake, no blazing meteor, no thrilling voice, ever wrought *conversion* in a single soul. This peculiar work is wrought by the Holy Spirit, giving efficacy to the sword of sacred truth. If then you would experience renewing grace, and be fitted to dwell with God, you must read and hear God's truth, with fixed attention, and with self-application, and at the same time with the fervent aspiration, *O sanctify me through thy truth; thy word is truth.*

Finally ; Read the Bible with the solemn and hearty resolution *to do the will of God*, just as fast as you learn it.

O, it is madness, it is impious mockery, for a poor worm to come near the Holy Oracles with a mind unyielding and disobedient to the heavenly voice. God cannot reasonably be expected to pour his cheering light on such a mind. But *if any man WILL DO HIS WILL, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*. Let there *be first a willing mind*, and the word of truth will not fail to illumine every path of duty ; and the Spirit of truth will sanctify every effort. Settle it therefore in your heart, that you *will obey*, unreservedly. And thus, if you find it written, *God now commandeth all men every where to repent* ; then repent *now*, for the Judge is at the door. If you find, *He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned* ; then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *now*, and *thou shalt be saved*. If you find it written, *Wash you ; make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well* ; then, from this moment, *be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord*. What less could infinite purity require, or infinite benevolence dictate ? What less could satisfy the soul of an immortal ? Rise then, child of corruption and misery. Grovel in sin no longer. Fix your eye on the throne of the Eternal, on the grandeur of the Eternal, on the felicity of the Eternal : and rest not in any thing short of that perfection, and glory, and blessedness, to which the great God our Saviour invites you. Make the effort at once, and with a willing mind, believing that God, who is reasonable, and sincere, and who worketh in you both to will and to do, will sanctify the effort, and enable you to do what he commands. Thus, in every thing, *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*. So shall this pure fountain of truth, which is poison and death to the disobedient, *be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life*.

In conclusion, fellow-sinner, let me press the consideration, that though these streams do indeed issue from the sanctuary of Heaven, and are calculated for the healing of the nations, yet if you have no peculiar relish for them, they exert no healing influence on *your* soul, nor can you ever relish those rivers of pleasure which flow at the right hand of God's throne. It is indeed a most fearful experiment, to have these waters of salvation, these Scriptures of God, round about you, from day to day, and from week to week, and yet give them no cordial reception. It is as though God himself were visibly present, daily inviting you to communion with him, while you continue to say, *Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways* ! And dare you persevere in such guilt ? O, beware how you *provoke the Holy One of Israel* ! For *who can stand before his indignation ? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ?*

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SERMONS XLII. & XLIII.

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THE FINAL CONDITION OF ALL MEN.

MATTHEW, XXV. 46.—*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*

THE final condition of all men, after the judgment, is here represented by the Judge himself. It will be happy or miserable, according to their works. As rational beings then, we should strive to avoid this everlasting punishment, and thus secure an eternity of bliss. Let us then, under a deep impression of things eternal, attend to the instruction of our Lord and Saviour on this momentous subject.

I. He teaches that *all men* must stand before him in judgment. He shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil ; and render to every man according to his deeds.

II. The day of judgment will be *at the end of this world*. It cannot take place, until all men have existed and had their day of probation. Hence Christ says, "In the *end of this world*, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This separation is also represented in the parable of the net, to be at the end of the world. Peter, likewise, represents the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, to be at the time when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth and its works shall be destroyed. John fixes the final judgment at the same period : "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it ; from whose face, the earth and the heavens fled away. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works." This cannot be till the end of the world, when there shall be a general resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust.

Our Saviour's description of the final judgment begins thus : "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory ; and before him shall be gathered all nations." This agrees with John's seeing the Judge on a great white throne, and the dead standing before him, to be judged according to their works. It must therefore be at the end of the generations of men, and of their state of probation, that they all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

their exquisite and endless torment? The never-dying worm, surely, cannot die: unquenchable fire cannot be quenched.

We are also assured, that Christ will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable. His floor means his visible kingdom on earth. The wheat and the chaff represent saints and sinners. Their different end is here described. The saints are received into heaven; but the wicked are consigned to unquenchable fire, as their endless punishment.

Paul says of the enemies of the cross, that their end is destruction. This proves that those who die enemies to the cross, can never be happy: for their end is not happiness, but misery. The same apostle teaches, that Christ shall take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel; and that they shall be punished with everlasting destruction. "He that made them will not have mercy on them; and He that formed them will show them no favour."

After John saw in prophetic vision the dead standing before God, and judged according to their works, he declares, that *whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire*. No state, but of misery, does the word of God ever assign to the wicked in the future world. No happiness is ever mentioned as reserved for them. But their state is ever contrasted with that of the righteous, as a state of suffering which admits of no hope. "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth." "The end of the upright is peace." But "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." O, how striking will this contrast appear, when the wicked shall go from the judgment-seat to inherit *the blackness of darkness for ever, while the righteous shall shine forth, as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father!*

More proof of the doctrine of endless misery could be adduced; but can it be necessary? Has not enough, and more than enough, been given, to satisfy any mind open to conviction? Can this proof be safely rejected? Or can these divine declarations be wrested from their proper meaning without great guilt?

This doctrine, my hearers, is very solemn, and of great practical influence. Its beneficial influence on civil society could be clearly shown; but I now speak of higher interests. "Knowing the *terror* of the Lord, we persuade men." By this, the apostle entreated and urged men to repent and be reconciled to God, and escape his wrath. What better method could he take to awaken the stupid? This was the Saviour's method. He preached future misery in almost every discourse: and Christ was a perfect preacher of the kingdom of God. He was anointed to preach the day of vengeance of our God, as well as good tidings to the meek, and the acceptable year of the Lord. The preaching of terror to the ungodly, for their conversion, is thus sanctioned by Infinite Benevolence. And what faithful preacher can neglect it? The desert of this misery is deeply fixed in the sinner's mind by the Spirit, whenever he works repentance and faith in the heart. Without this conviction, who can feel his need of an infinite atonement? Who will apply to the infinite Saviour, till he feels exposed to everlasting wo? To win souls to Christ, then, this final perdition must be clearly taught. By concealing it, we might do you an irreparable injury. And what curses would you utter against us in eternal ages!

The doctrine of future misery has salutary influence also on saints. This was the apostle's experience. "I keep under my body," says he "and bring

it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." And he urges his fellow-Christians to mortify the deeds of the body, through the Spirit, by saying to them, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" that is, suffer eternal death. So he earnestly persuades others to "labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief;" that is, be for ever excluded from heaven, as the unbelieving Israelites were from the land of promise. What doctrine can better alarm the careless professor? What but the looking for of judgment and fiery indignation can surprise hypocrites? How much will the fear of his Father's wrath quicken the child of God in making his calling and election sure? The more he is afraid of God's righteous judgments, the more will he strive, with a filial spirit, to work out his salvation. What like this doctrine can impress on saints their everlasting obligations to Christ? Can they feel that he has redeemed them from endless perdition, and not abound in love and praise? And what can make them so deeply anxious for sinners, as a sense of the eternal misery which awaits the impenitent? What fervent prayers must it excite for their conversion? Who can realize their danger, and yet do nothing for their salvation? The doctrine of endless punishment is therefore of great practical influence.

On the other hand, to dispute this doctrine is of imminently dangerous tendency. It leads to a neglect of the great salvation; it dishonours Christ, who has so much taught it; and it is resisting the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration it comes to us. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar." He treats him as a liar—a false witness. What God has uttered as truth, he regards as falsehood. Is it safe to do this? Does it tend to salvation, or to ruin? Will any one here say, "I do not dispute God's word; I believe it: but I dispute the meaning some put upon it?" But do you not dispute his word, in disputing endless misery? Certainly, if there is any meaning in the language of Scripture, this is taught: and what God has taught in his word, will abide for ever. To dispute it, prevents your repentance, and hardens you in sin. It wastes precious time. The Judge will ask, "Why did you reject my testimony?" What can you answer? Can you make him satisfaction for this contempt of his truth? Or must you not rather stand condemned? Suppose the doctrine of endless misery proves true,—but you have treated it as false, and have done nothing to escape it,—where then will be your soul, when you enter eternity and find this misery to be real? Can you seriously think of this, and still risk your soul on the rejection of God's testimony? A dreadful punishment is revealed; and no escape, but for those only who *believe* God's testimony, and *repent*, and *forsake sin*. O! what is prudence in such a case? and what is folly? "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

SERMON XLII.

MATT. XXV. 46.—*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*

THE doctrine of endless punishment has been proved in the preceding discourse: but the subject is so momentous as to deserve farther consideration. We should be well established in the truth. There should be no wavering mind, where eternal interests are at stake. Here the indulgence of doubt or

disbelief must tend to final ruin. Let us then inquire, very seriously, if there be any reason to disbelieve the endless punishment of the ungodly.

1. Can we disbelieve it, because it is not plainly revealed? But that the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, is as plain as that the righteous are placed in endless felicity. Here is nothing equivocal or ambiguous. The language is very definite. What words could be better chosen than those in the text? And to render the doctrine of endless punishment still more impressive and awakening, it is taught by prophets and apostles in various forms of discourse. But the meaning is ever plain. The truth strikes the unprejudiced mind with convincing power; and cannot be evaded without wresting the Scriptures of God.

2. Can we disbelieve this doctrine for want of proper testimony? We have the testimony of the Judge himself, that he will come in his glory; gather all nations before him; judge them according to their works; give the righteous eternal life; and sentence the wicked to eternal death. This is the testimony of the faithful and true Witness, who came to reveal eternal things.

Do you doubt whether we have the doctrine of Christ as he taught it? But he promised the Holy Ghost to his disciples, to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them. This promise he fulfilled; and so enabled them to record his words faithfully. What was spoken by the Lord, is confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. These miracles were wrought in open day, and could not be denied. They proved the writers of the New Testament to be divinely inspired: and what they wrote was published to the world, and was open to the inspection of friends and foes. These watched each other, and would detect any alteration that should be made in the writings of the apostles. At no period, therefore, could these writings be altered without detection. We thus have the Scriptures as given by the inspiration of God. How then can we doubt such testimony?

3. Can we suppose that this coming of Christ to gather and judge all nations has taken place, and that therefore we are not concerned in it? It is true, this coming of Christ to judge the world is connected, in his discourse, with two other instances of his coming, which are mentioned in the preceding chapter. The first is his coming, in his holy providence, to destroy Jerusalem. He began with this, because he had just foretold it; and was asked by the disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He gave the signs of his coming to destroy that city, and then spoke in these words: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." But Christ did not in person come in the clouds of heaven to destroy that city and people. The Romans were the executioners of his vengeance. They besieged and desolated Jerusalem. By the judgments which they were the instruments of inflicting, Christ came in power and great glory. His wrath came on all the tribes of the land of Israel, which were then collected at that devoted city. By this destruction of his enemies, his power and glory were manifested. The kingdom of his grace was also advanced, as he foretold in these words: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The elect were not gathered to Jerusalem at that time; but the Christians there, fled to the mountains and other places, as Christ had directed, "By the special providence of God, after the

Romans, under Cestius Gallus, made their first advance towards Jerusalem, they suddenly withdrew again, in a most unexpected and indeed impolitic manner; at which Josephus testifies his surprise, since the city might then have been easily taken. By this means, they gave, as it were, a signal to the Christians to retire; which, in regard to this admonition, they did, some to Pella, and others to Mount Libanus, and thereby preserved their lives." Nor were Christians then, more than at other times, gathered into heaven. These words must therefore relate to the extensive gathering of elect sinners to Christ, by the angels of the cross, or ministers of the Gospel, as the instruments of their conversion. The ministers of Christ are called his angels. His kingdom was more widely extended in consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of Christians. *This* coming of Christ was fulfilled during that generation. "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

The second coming of Christ, which he mentions in this connection, is of general application. "Watch, therefore; for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come.—Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." This may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but is not confined to that event. By what follows, it applies forcibly to his professed servants in every succeeding age, as an admonition to prepare for *death*. At death, he comes and calls them to a state of retribution. Death closes their state of probation, and is to them as the end of the world: for then they have no more to do with the world; and after death is the judgment. The soul is required, and returns to God to receive his blessing or his curse, and have its destiny fixed for eternity.

Having thus spoken of his coming by death, and given warning to prepare for this momentous event, Christ was naturally led to foretell his coming to judge the world, and render to all according to their deeds. And thus he passed from the destruction of Jerusalem to the state of every man, either at death, or at the final judgment; and spoke for the instruction and warning of men in all future time. But all this was not fulfilled when he desolated Jerusalem. All men did not then die, or have their bodies changed; nor were all men then judged and rewarded according to their works. The dead were not then raised from their graves; nor were all nations gathered before the Judge. But few, comparatively, were collected; and these were unbeliving Jews and Romans. A part of these were destroyed; but without any visible process of their works being brought into judgment. The others were continued in a state of probation. The Christian church was not then gathered before the Judge; but its members remained dispersed among the nations. The final separation was not then made between the wise and foolish virgins; nor were the faithful servants rewarded, and the slothful cast into outer darkness, as Christ represents in the parables concerning them. Christ did not then visibly come in person, so that every eye could see him, attended by all the holy angels, and sitting on a throne of glory as his judgment-seat. He did not then, in an open and public manner, separate all nations one from another, and divide them into two classes, the righteous and the wicked, placing them in two distinct companies, on his right hand, and on his left; and then say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." These things neither did nor could take place, when, by the Roman armies, he cut off some thousands of obstinate Jews. His coming to gather all nations before him, and to judge and pronounce final sentence upon them, according as they have done good or evil, as described in

connexion with the text, is vastly different from his coming to inflict his wrath on a small part of his enemies, within the limits of Jerusalem. So that the prediction of his coming to judge the world in righteousness has not yet been fulfilled.

4. Can we disbelieve the doctrine of endless misery, because of counter-evidence? Such evidence cannot be found. On this subject, there is no contradiction in the word of God. God has not said that the Judge of quick and dead will *not* come in his glory at the end of the world to judge all men according to their works; that there will be *no* resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust; and that there will be *no* exact and final separation between them according to their characters. He has not said that he will treat *all men alike* in the day of his righteous judgment, and sentence *none* to endless misery. He has not said that those who go away into everlasting punishment, *shall be released* from their torment; that the great gulf *shall be filled up*, and passed over; that their never-dying worm *shall die*; and that their unquenchable fire shall *cease* to burn. Nothing of this purport appears in his word. Nor has he said any thing of the ungodly in the day of judgment or in eternity, which is not consistent with their endless misery. But whatever any may think inconsistent with this, does not touch the point, but relates to this life, or to the resurrection, or solely to the kingdom of the redeemed. This will be briefly shown.

Christ shall have "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." But this shall be in the present world; and it will not bring those to love and serve him who have died impenitent. These must still suffer endless perdition.

"He that is dead is freed from sin."—This is not *natural* death, when the body returns to dust; but *death unto sin*. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The meaning is simply this; He that is dead to the love of sin is freed from its condemning power, or acquitted from its guilt. His being dead to sin is the evidence that he is justified by faith.

"God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."* This is explained by another passage; "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to *them that believe*."† This faith is exercised in this life. God has mercy on all that believe. But he has not mercy on those who die in unbelief.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."‡ Christ explains this in saying: "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me."§ These are the all whom he draws to himself. Those who die without saving faith, are not given to him, nor drawn to him. To such he said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.—My sheep hear my voice,—and I give unto them eternal life."||

"Who will have all men to be saved."¶ His command expresses his will, or willingness, in this case. He commands all men to repent, that they may live. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** This is his command to every one that hears his gospel. He is sincere in this command. He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that he turn and live. This he truly desires; as he desired the obedience of Israel: "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children after them."†† But they did not all obey. Many of them perished in their disobedience. So, many now refuse to repent and to believe, and die in sin. These he never purposed to save.

* Rom. ii. 32.

|| John x. 26—28.

† Gal. iii. 32.

¶ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

‡ John xii. 32.

** Acts xvi. 31.

§ John vi. 37.

†† Deut. v. 28.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* But the penitent only accept his offered forgiveness. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Those only are reconciled to him, who obtain like precious faith with the apostles; and continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.† If Judas had followed Christ in the regeneration, he would have had a throne, as one of the twelve apostles. But he had a devil, and was a traitor. By transgression, he fell from his apostleship; and another was divinely appointed to take it.‡

"That, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together, in one, all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."§ But only those who accept redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, are thus gathered. He gathers together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad. Some of these are now in heaven and some on earth.

There shall be "the times of restitution of all things."|| This restitution will be at Christ's second appearing. "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution." In reference to his *first* appearing, it is said, "Elias truly shall first come and *restore all things*."¶ This was fulfilled in John his messenger. He prepared the way before Christ. Many of the children of Israel, he turned to the Lord their God. He turned the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; and made ready a people prepared for the Lord. But this restoring all things brought only a part of the Jews into cordial subjection to their anointed King. His ministry effected all that the Lord then intended for the establishment of his kingdom. So in the *future* restitution, Christ will *put all things in their place*. He will put down all rule, and all authority and power opposed to him, and put all enemies under his feet. All things shall then be subdued to him. All his enemies shall be consigned to their place of punishment, no more to trouble the heirs of his kingdom; and his saints shall enjoy the "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

"As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall *many* be made righteous."** But believers only are made righteous by the obedience of Christ. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth *not*, is *condemned* already."†† Justification is limited to those who are in Christ. Thus it is limited by the Apostle, when in the same connexion, he says, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." These in this life are born of God, and they are all, upon whom comes the free gift unto justification of life. Those who are not born of the Spirit, have no part in this justification. The many made sinners by Adam's offence, are all his posterity; and the many justified by the obedience of Christ, are all his spiritual seed.

"In Christ, shall all be made alive."†† But this is spoken of the bodies of men being raised from the dead. The Apostle is proving the resurrection of them that are Christ's at his coming. But when the saints then awake to life, the ungodly awake "to *shame and everlasting contempt*."§§

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

† Col. i. 20—23.

‡ Acts i. 23—26.

§ Ephes. i. 10.

|| Acts iii. 21.

¶ Matt. xvii. 11.

** Rom. v. 19.

†† John iii. 18.

‡‡ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

§§ See Dan. xii. 2. and John v. 29.

the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."* But this was before Christ opened the seals of the book given him, and before the events then predicted were accomplished. It took place, when many were the enemies of God, and could not join cordially in this anthem of praise. None could thus join in it, but his friends, and these only could be meant by the inspired writer.

"Behold I make all things new."† But this is spoken of the blessed state of the righteous after the final judgment; and must be confined to that; because we are immediately afterwards told, *that the ungodly shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

In all these passages of Scripture, there is nothing which is inconsistent with the endless destruction of those who die impenitent. And I know of no other passage which is any more favourable to their case.

5. Can we disbelieve endless misery, because we think all men alike, or nearly so? All men by nature are children of wrath and under sin. This is abundantly taught in the sacred Scriptures. All the unconverted have the carnal mind of enmity to God, and live in disobedience to his will. They have, however, different degrees of wickedness, and deserve different degrees of punishment. But all do not *continue* in sin. Some are born of God, and accepted as righteous in the Beloved. These are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. They walk in newness of life. Every child of God is a new creature. His views, affections, and motives are changed. The reigning principle of selfishness has received a deadly wound; and love to God and man is now his ruling principle. He is essentially different from the unconverted. You see this difference in Abel and Cain. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; by which he obtained witness that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts."‡ But Cain, through unbelief and self-righteous pride, disdained to offer such a sacrifice. He "was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."§ The same difference is seen in Paul and Judas. At the time of his conversion, Paul might be a far greater sinner, than Judas was, when he first professed to follow Christ. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. But through Divine mercy, he repented, and embraced that Jesus as his Saviour, whom he had so despised. To the service of Jesus his Lord, he unreservedly devoted his life. But how differently did Judas? He made such a profession of love to Christ, as to gain, for a time, the confidence of his fellow disciples. But he proved to be a hypocrite and a thief. He sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and betrayed him with a kiss. He killed himself, and went to his own place. Such was his end. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born."|| This proves his endless misery. For those words of Christ cannot be true, if his misery should ever end, and he should afterwards have eternal life.

Now there has been, and there still is, a succession of believers of the same spirit with Abel and Paul. The work of renewing grace on the hearts of men has never ceased; but converts to Christ have been multiplied. In these, his true church has been continued, and will be, to the end of time: for he has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."¶ We cannot always distinguish these living members from the ungodly; but the Lord knoweth them that are his. The day of judgment will make them manifest from all the impenitent. The saints will then be perfectly holy, and the ungodly be full of iniquity. Then Christ's words will be verified: "Not every

* Rev. v. 13.
§ 1 John iii. 12.

† Rev. xxi. 5.
|| Matt. xxv. 24.

‡ Heb. xi. 4.
¶ Matt. xvi. 18.

one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Saints do the will of God ; but sinners work iniquity. This is the essential difference between them ; and this is reason sufficient for their final separation.

Can any think there are no believers now, because it is said, that signs, or miracles, shall follow them that believe ;† but none of these signs are ever seen ? If there have been no believers since miracles ceased, then for fifteen centuries or more, Christ has had no seed to serve him in all the earth ; the gates of hell have prevailed against his church ; and his word has failed. But this cannot be true : and Christ did not say, that miraculous signs should follow *all* believers through *all* ages. They followed them that believed, as far as was necessary for the confirmation and establishment of revealed truth.

6. Is there any reason to suppose that the wicked will be changed at some future time ? But the Scripture reveals no saving change after death. Sinners may repent unto salvation, before death, but not afterwards. At death, “the wicked is driven away in his wickedness.”‡ So it was with the rich man. He died and was buried, and in hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off. Christ represented his state as absolutely hopeless. The present life is the only space for repentance. Here only can the means of grace be enjoyed. Here the character is formed for eternity. Here the saints are made vessels of mercy, and prepared for glory ; and here the ungodly fill up the measure of their iniquity, and fit themselves for destruction. God endures them with much long-suffering ; while after their hardness and impenitent hearts, they treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Men are urged to turn now and live, lest they die in their sins and have no remedy. “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”§ “He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, *and that without remedy.*”|| To those, who thus die and are destroyed, no hope is left. They do not repent between death and the resurrection. “For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”¶ And Christ says, they that have done evil come forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation. At death and the resurrection their character is the same. In the same character, they appear before the Judge. They are judged *according to the deeds done in the body*. Some may think otherwise : but “the expectation of the wicked shall perish.”***

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”†† But those who die in their sins, have no part in *this* change. This is a change of the bodies of living saints at Christ's coming to raise the dead. In this chapter, the Apostle treats exclusively of the resurrection of saints. Speaking of the saints, as one body, he says, “We shall not all sleep,” or die ; for we who shall be alive at Christ's coming, shall all be changed without dying. The next words show that this is a change of the body : “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” The body only is corruptible and mortal, and must be made incorruptible and im-

* Matt. vii. 21—23.

|| Prov. xxix. 1.

† Mark xvi. 17, 18.

¶ Eccl. ix. 10.

‡ Prov. xiv. 32.

** Prov. x. 28.

§ John viii. 24.

†† 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

9. Can we disbelieve endless misery, because it seems inconsistent with the love of God? But he always manifests his justice in full agreement with his love. He did this, when he deluged the world; when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah; when he overthrew Pharaoh and his host; when he doomed the Israelites to perish in the wilderness; and when he poured his tremendous judgments on Jerusalem. His love and justice sweetly harmonized in these events. So they do in every calamity which now falls upon men. The mercy of God is extolled by the Psalmist as enduring for ever, in view of Pharaoh's destruction.* The song of Moses on that event is sung by the holy, in unison with the song of the Lamb.†

It is not only consistent with benevolence, but also the dictate of benevolence, for God to love righteousness and to hate iniquity; and to make this love and hatred fully manifest in his conduct towards saints and sinners. This he will for ever do, to the unspeakable joy of all holy beings. They will not rejoice in seeing misery for its own sake; but they will rejoice to see God's name and law glorified in his righteous retributions.

It is not consistent with love, for God to punish the wicked beyond their deserts, or to have pleasure in their death, in itself considered. Neither of these can ever be imputed to him. But it would be totally inconsistent with his justice and hatred of iniquity, for him, in a state of impartial rewards, to treat the wicked as he does the righteous. "The wicked his soul hateth." How then can he consistently do otherwise, in a state of retribution, than treat them for ever as objects of his hatred?

But can a kind parent see his children in ceaseless pain, and not relieve them, when he is able? No; he is bound to relieve them, if he sustains to them only the relation of a parent, and simply acts as such. His natural affection moves him to do it, and God requires it of him; so that he is very criminal to do otherwise. But God sustains a very different relation to men. He is their Lawgiver and their Judge. He has a moral government to maintain, and a law to execute. While, therefore, he rewards the obedient, it is right and necessary that he should punish the disobedient. Unless he does this, his law is trodden under foot, and his government destroyed. It is murder in a parent to drown his child; but it was right in God to drown a wicked world. Lot could not lawfully destroy his sons-in-law; but God did it in righteousness. What crime and cruelty for a man to burn a ship at sea, when all on board must suffer a most distressing death! but God in his providence does it, without the least impeachment of his goodness. We long to rescue persons from drowning, or from the flames. This ardent love to them is our duty. God can save them: and yet he does not, but lets them perish. Are we more benevolent than God? No: God is love; and has infinitely stronger desires to save them, if he could do it consistently with higher purposes of his goodness. These things teach us not to compare God with ourselves; nor think that he must be governed by our views and feelings. He can do that in righteousness, and in the purest benevolence, which we cannot do, either in love or equity. We cannot, in our private capacity, execute a murderer, without being guilty of his blood; but judges and executive officers can do it justly, and with entire benevolence. How then can we think it inconsistent with the love of God, for him to execute *his* law, and to punish transgressors according to their deserts?

In the work of redemption, we see his justice and love in most beautiful agreement. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

* See Psalm cxxxvi.

† See Rev. xv.

God sent forth his Son to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Here mercy and truth meet together;—righteousness and peace embrace each other. Seeing Christ has fulfilled the law and satisfied Divine Justice, God can, consistently, have mercy on sinners, and save every penitent believer.

But Christ gave himself a ransom for all: how then is it consistent with divine love that any should perish? I reply, He did not die with the intention to redeem those who reject him through life. His death is a ransom sufficient for all; and every one under the Gospel has the bread of life set before him, that he may eat and live for ever, if he is willing and obedient. This shows God's benevolence. But if the sinner refuses this offered salvation, it is surely consistent with divine love to let him perish, as he deserves. The man who made a great supper, and bade many, said, on their refusal, "None of these men, which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." But this was consistent with his kindness in providing the supper, and in giving them invitation freely to partake of it. It was wholly their fault that they did not partake. They refused his invitation. His kindness did not oblige him to make them willing to accept it, or to prevent their famishing. He had a right to bestow his bounty on whom he pleased. So when Christ, the bread of life, is offered to men, it is suitable they should have their choice, to accept or refuse. If they refuse, how can it be inconsistent with the love of God, that they should suffer death as the consequence? When they will not come to Christ, that they might have life, what claim can they possibly have on the love of God, to make them willing to come? His making others willing, of his mere good pleasure, can give them no claim to such a favour. It is lawful for him to do what he will with his own. He is not bound by his love to make transgressors equal partakers of his mercy; but we see, from numberless facts, that he can consistently show more mercy to some than to others. In their final anguish, he can say to some, "I have called, but ye refused: I would have gathered you, but ye would not." This is an appeal to their conscience, that their ruin is just, and that his love requires nothing more to be done for them.

It was consistent with the love of God to bruise his own well-beloved Son, and put his soul to grief, when he gave himself a ransom for sinners; and can it be inconsistent to inflict his wrath for ever on those who reject his Son? Will not his injured love demand their destruction, and be honoured by it? "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." For though "God is love," yet he is also "a consuming fire." "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord." And O! how just and overwhelming must be the wrath of the LAMB, on those who laugh at his threatenings, and despise his authority! How keenly must they feel his wrath to be consistent with infinite benevolence!

REFLECTIONS.

1. This subject, my hearers, demands most serious consideration. As sinners, we are all liable to endless punishment. Cursed is every one that sins against God. Is the curse of God a light thing? Can we trifle with it? We are exhorted to fear, lest we come short of the saints' rest. This fear is

rational. You and I may lose that rest. My heart may finally deceive me : and if it should, my guilt and condemnation will be greater than yours. Have I then no reason to be afraid of God's judgments ? How can I bear his wrath for ever ? The Saviour could not endure it, even for a few hours, without exclaiming in agony, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " Can you endure it ? " Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee ? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." This wrath, Christ warns you to fear, more than death. *Be not afraid of them, that kill the body ; but fear him, who hath power to cast into hell you, I say unto you, Fear him.* In another place he solemnly exhorts, Enter ye in at the strait gate ; for *wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.* And, knowing that this doctrine would be disputed, he adds, in connexion, *Beware of false prophets—ye shall know them by their fruits.*

2. Sinners may trifle with these warnings now—may mock at sin and hell—but they cannot trifle long. While they cry, Peace, peace, *sudden destruction cometh.* The men of Noah's day slighted *his* warnings, and despised his preaching. God, they said, could not be so unmerciful.—But the overwhelming flood came. Lot seemed to his sons-in-law, as one that mocked. They could not ascribe such severity to God.—But suddenly the fire came down, and destroyed them. Jeremiah denounced Divine judgments, and called on the ungodly to repent, as the only means of escape. But false prophets made the people vain. Those whom they caused to err, loved them and their smooth things ; but despised Jeremiah and his warnings. They thought the false prophets had much the better views of God. But God condemned them as prophets speaking lies. His threatened judgments came. And the deceiver and the deceived were confounded together. An inspired apostle has also said, " There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways ; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

3. In such circumstances—amid such dangers—who among you, my hearers, is willing to remain in doubt, whether heaven or hell shall be his endless abode ? Who can neglect to settle this question on scriptural ground ? He that is born again may have the Spirit to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. This witness of the Spirit is by the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. " Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God." " Blessed are they that do his commandments ; that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Who of you has this Divine testimony that he is in Christ a new creature ; and so an heir of God, according to his promise of eternal life ? This is the great question to be settled.

But I see some of you unmoved—unconcerned—secure in sin—*while the wrath of God abideth on you!*—your house in flames, and you *asleep!*—or when called, still *loving to slumber.* Such indifference is unbecoming—is *irrational.* Eternity is just opening upon you. " In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh." Oh, that you were wise ; that you understood these things ; that you would consider your latter end !—that you would *escape for your life!* Thus, and thus only, may you hope to *enter into life eternal ; " when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."*

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SERMON XLIII.

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PHILADELPHIA.

THE SINNER'S SELF-DESTRUCTION AND ONLY REMEDY.

HOSEA, xiii. 9.—*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.*

THE impenitent sinner is ever disposed to throw the blame of his sins upon God; and thus to cheer his soul with the idea, that he shall not surely be punished for that which was unavoidable. Were God indeed the author of sin, this hope might be indulged with the most perfect safety. But what does a position of this kind imply? It implies that God, instead of delighting in justice, mercy, and truth, delights only in injustice, cruelty, and falsehood. If sinners are not willing thus to charge God foolishly,—if they are not willing to venture upon this broad stream of impiety and blasphemy, they must consent to have the guilt of their iniquities rest where God himself has placed it—on themselves. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.” In the text we notice,

I. A charge against the sinner of self-destruction: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.”

II. A gracious offer of restoration: “In me is thy help.”

To justify this charge against sinners, proofs may be drawn from the declarations of Scripture; from the course pursued by God in his revealed plan of mercy; and from the candid and self-condemning concessions of many who have died without hope.

1. Almost every page of the word of God bears some exhortation to the sinner, which is predicated on the fact of his moral agency; and every exhortation goes upon the supposition which lays the shame of his sin at his own door, and charges on his own perverseness the catastrophe of his ruin. In the very opening of his prophecy, Isaiah, as if he felt no liberty to speak in the rapturous strains with which his book is filled, until he had borne his testimony on the point before us, says, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my

people doth not consider." "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." I might run through the Prophets and the Psalms, and find them filled with such expressions as these,—“O that my people were wise, that they would consider their latter end, and understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel?” Similar language also abounds in the New Testament. “Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “O that thou hadst known, even in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but ye would not:—Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” But this is not all. God has seen fit to accompany his word by a most solemn and awful appeal, founded on his own existence. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?” Can language be more explicit than this? Now let the transgressor attribute his sin and destruction to any but himself; and what does he charge upon God’s word? He makes all these declarations of love—all these tender entreaties and expostulations of the Most High—nothing but words of mockery, and hypocrisy, and perjury!

2. That the sinner is the guilty cause of his own ruin may appear likewise from the course pursued by God in his revealed plan of mercy, and in his general providential dealings towards man.

I am not here to prove the depravity of the natural heart. That we are all sinners is a matter of experience, which it were as much folly, as it were impiety, to question. By the disobedience of one many were made sinners; and by our actual transgressions we have provoked the Lord to anger. Viewing man, then, as he is, a sinner, how does the conduct of God towards him fix upon him the charge of his own destruction! For when the curse came, as the consequence of a violated covenant of works, God interposed with his mighty and out-stretched arm. “Entering into a covenant of grace, he made salvation possible; he gave up the Son of his bosom to fulfil the law on our behalf, and to bear the punishment due for our sins; he offers the merits and the righteousness of his Son to all without exception who will receive him as their Ruler and Redeemer.”

But besides this, God in his mercy has actually placed barriers and difficulties in the way of the sinner’s destruction. He has interposed all the

convictions of natural conscience, all the dread of future misery, and all the heavenly displays of love, and happiness eternal; and the sinner who perishes, must absolutely surmount all these difficulties,—he must force away all these barriers, before he can accomplish his destruction. Nay, more, he must, if he perish, stain his rebellious footsteps in the blood, and trample on the love, of a Redeemer, who poured out his soul on the cross for man's salvation. And when God has done so much to save, upon whom shall be charged the ruin of the sinner, when it cometh? The charge must rest upon the sinner himself through the ceaseless ages of eternity. "Thou hast destroyed thyself."

But these are general ideas: I desire you, brethren, to consider the dealings of God towards each one of you in particular. Though the dispensations of his providence have been as various as your different relations in life, yet not one of you has been passed over in his works of love and mercy: Some in one way, and some in another, have been made the subjects of his moral interference. Let me attempt to trace out the lines of God's tenderness towards you. I borrow the train of thought from an elegant writer.—Here is an individual whom God hath placed under the mild control of some pious and godly parent—father or mother—who has sought with tears to turn him to the path of righteousness. Here is another, who, blessed with a pious and devoted wife, has been compelled, as it were, to listen to the mild preaching of a pious example. There is a wife, whose heart has been continually reproached by a husband who desires to walk in the ways of God. There is one upon whose head God hath showered the blessings of prosperity, in order that gratitude might burn, and kindle into love unfeigned. There is another who, touched by the hand of God, has mourned over the evils of adversity—calculated to lead him to a proper estimate of the vanity of earth. Here is one who has been brought to the very verge of the grave, and had the prospect of entering eternity totally unprepared; and yet God did not permit the fatal blow to descend; he snatched you, as it were, from the very borders of destruction; and you are in the land of the living; this very day in the house of God, a monument of his sparing mercy.

Carry back your thoughts, fellow-sinner, to the earliest periods upon which memory can fasten; let a solemn hour of meditation be occupied with the unnumbered mercies which you have received at the hand of Providence; let another hour be devoted to a recall of those dangers from which you have been rescued; let another be occupied in recounting the calls of God's word which have sounded in your ears,—the opportunities of grace and salvation which you have enjoyed and abused; let all the warnings, promises, and threatenings of Jehovah, which you have slighted, come up together in remembrance; and not even the deceitfulness and the desperate depravity of the heart can hide from you the solemn truth—
"Thou hast destroyed thyself."

3. One other proof that sinners are their own destroyers may be drawn from the candid concessions of many who have died without hope. And how affecting the argument drawn from so faithful a moment as that which separates between time and eternity! Many live as the fool liveth, and die as the fool dieth, having no bands in their death: but not unfrequently does it happen, that God rises up in the terrors of his insulted love, and leaves on the death-scene of the careless and impenitent the deep-marked features of the ruin that is coming. On this subject I may be allowed to repeat the observations of one whose many years in the ministry gave him the most abundant opportunities of familiarity with scenes of death. "With whatever confidence," says he, "transgressors, while in health and strength, may assert their blamelessness,—with whatever impiety and boldness they may charge God as the author of their destruction,—yet their language will be changed in the honest hour when they shall have to struggle with the king of terrors. I have more than once heard the sinner, while he supposed that death was yet at a distance from him, quieting his conscience by sophistical reasoning, and excusing himself for his continuance in guilt. I have beheld this same individual stretched on a bed of sickness, pale, feeble, languishing, in the midst of the tears and sighs of relatives, expecting each moment that death would arrive and tear his unwilling soul from the body, and bear it before the tribunal of his Judge. Ah, his faltering tongue no longer dared to extenuate his neglects; his trembling heart abstained from its unholy charges against God:—shuddering and affrighted at the misery which awaited him, he exclaimed, 'Fool that I was, to have rejected an offered salvation,—fool, to have closed my ears against a Saviour,—fool, to have slighted the importunities of a compassionate God. I perish, and I perish under the agonizing reflection, that I am the author of my own destruction!'" Yes, brethren, and I remember a death-scene described with inimitable pathos by Dr. Young, and told while the facts of the case were strongly impressed upon his memory,—I remember those awfully affecting exclamations, as the last effort of a soul, ruined and lost by neglect—"I have been too strong for Omnipotence,—I have plucked down ruin."—"Plucked down ruin!" yes! experience often seconds the declaration of God, and many a dying agony tells,—and many a dying groan echoes back the charge which a God of truth, of holiness, and of justice, fastens on the sinner,—"Thou hast destroyed thyself."

Every impenitent sinner accomplishes his own destruction, by an obstinate perseverance in that course which he *knows* to be sinful. And the man who goes to perdition from this land of light, aggravates his guilt and condemnation a thousand fold by a wilful rejection of the All-glorious Substitute.

I have thus endeavoured to impress the truth so obviously revealed in the text. that the sinner is his own destroyer. This destruction-

unless speedy help be obtained, must be endless, and inexpressibly awful. The subject then, is one of deep and solemn interest. I now see hundreds around me, who in all human probability will refuse to give this subject the attention its importance demands ; and who, by the daily continued carelessness of their lives, only add stronger confirmation to the solemn and affecting truth of God—"Thou hast destroyed thyself."—But may I not hope that some, who have been unaffected by the terrors of the Lord, as exhibited in the former part of the text, may yet be constrained by his merciful kindness, as exhibited in the latter part,—“In me is thy help”? Behold, then, the goodness mingled with the severity of God,—“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thy help.” From the tremendous language with which the verse commences, God breaks off, as it were, the expected malediction, and brings to the mind a subject of which infinite love could alone have originated a thought. There is no analogy in nature by which to elucidate the idea I would convey. But, in imagination, suppose that on some summer day, when the bright orb had poured on the earth the most fiery of his beams—the heavens should become dark—suppose that clouds rolled on clouds should have all the appearance of immediately bursting on the earth with all the artillery of the skies—and suppose that with all the quickness and rapidity of thought, and with no preparatory indications, these terrific signs in heaven were at once dissipated, and an unclouded sky presented to view. How astonishing, how unexpected the change ! Yet, my friends, feeble is this imagined occurrence to illustrate the meaning of the text. In a spiritual sense, there are clouds of awful portent athwart the heavens ; the thunders roar ; the tempest comes rushing on ; and the line of desolation crosses your path. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” But suddenly the clouds are gone—the thunders hushed—the glorious Sun of Righteousness appears—and a voice of more than angel sweetness is heard ; “In me—in me is thy help.” This introduces the second division of our subject :—

II. For self-ruined sinners there is help in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The terrific is here softened by the tender ; the mercy of God beams forth amidst his most awful declarations of anger. And the sinner for whose condition there seemed no hope, may here learn to magnify the riches of Divine grace, and to adore the goodness which has provided a way of salvation.

The two great difficulties which stand in the way of man's salvation, are the condemnation of sin, and the corruption of the heart ; and for the removal of these the Lord Jesus Christ is the only efficient help. To remove the condemning power of sin, Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient sacrifice. In God's word we are taught, that when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, to take upon him our nature ; and as a Divine and voluntary Substitute, to bear the heavy visitations of justice in

our stead: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."—"He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"—"He was made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—There is help for sinners in Christ, because when once they are led to see their condition by nature, and their need of a Saviour, they find in him just such a Saviour as their case requires; one who has given himself as an offering and a sacrifice for sin, and who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto him. Considering man, then, as he always is considered in the light of the Gospel; considering man as a sinner, his help is alone in Christ; for it is Christ, as revealed in the Gospel, whose redemption answers the great purposes of averting the just displeasure of God, fulfilling the demands of a violated law, expiating the sinner's guilt, and restoring him through faith to the forfeited favour of the Most High. So that now there is nothing necessary to the sinner's reconciliation with the offended Majesty of heaven, which he may not, if he come with penitence and faith, find in the complete redemption of the cross. As a sacrifice for sin, then, as an all-sufficient sacrifice, there is for sinners help in Jesus. If they will but know and feel the wretchedness of their condition, and their need of such a Saviour, and thus be led to flee for refuge to the hope which is set before them in the Gospel, they will find that there is a fulness in this redemption, which is competent to procure the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their persons. Help then to the perishing sinner is found in Christ alone. "His life was a transcript of the righteousness of the law, and his death the effect of its imputed penalty; and thus by his obedience unto death, he brought in an everlasting righteousness. To make that righteousness divine, the Deity of Christ communicates infinite sufficiency to the sufferings of his humanity, and renders a satisfaction to the law and justice of the eternal Lawgiver. By this most gracious and wisely ordered plan, the moral government of God is maintained, the law is vindicated in its curse—the perfections of the Godhead are honoured in their respective claims, without the smallest diminution of their glory, and the sinner—the self-ruined sinner—who is brought to a cordial submission to this revelation, and a cordial acceptance of it in its grace and fulness, is saved upon terms which magnify the justice as well as the mercy of God, and bring every attribute into an union the most clear and impressive." As to the pardon of sin then—and as the purchase of his blood and righteousness—it is the high prerogative—it is the privilege—it is the delight of the Saviour, when he tells sinners that the course they are pursuing, if persisted in, will bring them into ruin, which at last can never be repaired—to call from his high and holy throne in heaven, in the language of awful and terrific appeal, yet mingled with the tenderest as-

surances of pardon and salvation;—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."—And he has authorized it to be added as the one impressive answer of the Gospel to all inquirers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"

Again; In the Lord Jesus Christ there is help for the sinner, because he is competent to remove the remaining barrier from the path of salvation. I mean the corruption of the heart. As none but an omnipotent Power could at first create man after the divine image, so none but an omnipotent Being can re-instamp that image on the soul. But this is the prerogative of Christ; for he is not only made unto us righteousness and salvation, but wisdom and sanctification. He is not only "exalted a Prince and a Saviour;" but one grand object of his exaltation is to grant "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." "Unto you," says St. Peter, "God hath raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from your iniquities." In him every penitent sinner, however aggravated his guilt, may find peace with God, and the hope of glory everlasting. In him he may have wisdom, strength, and righteousness. In him he feel his condition as a sinner, and taste and see how gracious the Lord is; if he but humbly seek to experience the efficacy of atoning blood, and the renovating influences of the Spirit; the ruined sinner, like the prodigal, though dead, is made alive again—though lost he is found. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

Here then is ample refuge for the guilty. But O, of what avail is it, as it respects many, that these affecting truths are sounded in their ears? In a greater or less degree they form the substance of every discourse which is based upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. But where is the evidence of their appropriate effect? While the note of alarm is ringing on the ear, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;"—and while it is perhaps acknowledged to be the voice of God,—do we observe sinners roused, as it were, from the chill of death? And as the mild and winning proffer of help for the wretched succeeds the rougher voice of denunciation, like the soft whisper of evening after the desolating tempest, do we behold them at once casting themselves at the foot of the cross, and availing themselves of the almighty remedy? Oh no: the multitude slumber on, heedless alike of the tenderest entreaties of love, and the most terrific proclamations of wrath. Here and there one only is arrested in his career of worldliness and sin, is convinced of guilt and danger, and is brought to seek refuge, where only it can be found, in "Jesus Christ and him crucified." But we are pained and humbled to reflect, that the multitude still slumber on, just as though no Angel of redeeming mercy had ever been revealed.

Our subject, my brethren, should deeply affect us with a sense of *the evil of sin*. In every point of view, it must appear an evil thing and bitter to sin against the Lord. We might contemplate the enormity of

this evil as seen in the bloody cross—or as seen in the desolations which sin is causing on the earth: But we would now view it only as it appears in the ruin of the immortal soul. O sinner, “thou hast destroyed thyself.”—The evil of sin here stands out in the impressive aspect of an eternity of happiness lost, and an eternity of misery incurred. It is sin which surrounds the judgment-seat with all its terrors. And it is sin which draws down upon such beings as we are the awful sentence, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Under the holy government of God, the least transgression carries with it a condemning power, that, without timely application of the remedy provided in the Gospel, must for ever destroy the soul. For “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” What then must be the enormity of the sins of a whole life combined; and especially of the sin of rejecting the salvation offered through the blood of the Son of God!

But if the subject has thus called for a concluding remark on the evil of sin; it equally calls for another on *the compassionate love of God.*—“In me is thy help.” Here is the most abundant encouragement to all those, (if any such there be,) who are convinced of the awful condition in which they stand as sinners. To them the text affords an all-sufficient antidote. How earnestly then should they seek, and with what overwhelming gratitude should they accept the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Behold, God is thy salvation; trust in him and be not afraid—the Lord Jehovah is thy strength, and he shall become thine everlasting glory.

Finally, my hearers, let all of us form just ideas of sin, and just ideas of God's reconciling mercy, and just ideas of what God now requireth of us. An all-sufficient remedy is provided; but to you it can be of no avail, without humble and hearty *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* These terms are reasonable—they are infinitely benevolent. God himself could offer none more favourable, without disgrace to his holy throne. He places before you your ruined condition; and he solemnly declares, “Thou hast destroyed thyself.” He places before you the strong hold to which the self-ruined sinner may resort—“In me is thy help.” But if the terrors of the Lord be despised—if the love of God be rejected, O how shall you stand in that day, when *judgment shall be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet?* “When God riseth up, what will you say?” and “when he visiteth, what will you answer?” O, there will be mourning—if not now—there will be mourning at the judgment-seat. And if on that day one sinner who now hears me, should be driven from the presence of the LAMB, not one sound will ring more awfully in his ear, than that which now reaches him,—“*Thou hast destroyed thyself.*” Not one source of agony will be more poignant than the everlasting recollection of the once offered mercy of God,—“*In me is thy help.*” “Now then, consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear

you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Consider this, "*lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!*"

Dearly beloved, I beseech you, in view of this subject examine yourself faithfully, and see to it, that the guilt of self-murder be not fastened on your soul! I beseech you, as in Christ's stead, *think on these things*, ere yet it be too late. While yet you are in the land of the living—while in rich mercy your day of probation is lengthened out—(), *think on these things*. Self-ruined as you are by transgression, and justly deserving of everlasting wo, there is yet one way of escape. A voice from the excellent glory now cries—"In me is thy help." Yes, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But reject this Saviour,—sin away this day of merciful visitation—and that arm now so kindly extended for your relief, must come down with accumulated wrath on your head. For, if he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?

SERMON XLIV.

BY RALPH EMERSON, A. M.
NORFOLK, CONNECTICUT.

THE CHIEF EVIL OF SIN.

PSALM LI. 4.—*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*

THIS passage of Scripture presents a case of no small importance, and involving a principle of universal application. It presents the Psalmist deploring a particular sin, and in language dictated by the unerring Spirit.

What then is the principle on which is based the declaration—*Against THEE, THEE ONLY, have I sinned?* In what sense was it against God ONLY? Was it merely a sin of the heart, followed by no act of injury to man?—a swelling of pride?—a thought of blasphemy?—or a purpose of murder, that was timely abandoned? A recurrence to the bloody and polluted record of facts in the affair of Uriah, decides this point. The facts as recorded in 2 Samuel ii, present a complication and atrocity of crime.

rarely equaled;—deception, adultery, and murder united. Will it then be said, that David was here pleading before God an extenuation of his crime, from the consideration that it was committed against *him only*, without harm to society? No; he had injured the wife of Uriah—he had murdered Uriah himself—he had thrown away the lives of those who were slain in the same forlorn hope—he had injured his whole kingdom with the loss of its brave defenders—and he had injured Joab, by making him an accomplice in foul guilt. He could not then mean that he had not sinned against man.

Will it be said, that he had not specifically in view the sin as committed against man, at the time of uttering this confession? This supposition is equally impossible; for in this very Psalm, and almost in the same breath, he exclaims, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.” He knew and felt at the moment, the gross injury he had done to fellow-beings. The picture of his guilt, as exhibited by the prophet Nathan, overwhelmed him with a sense of his wanton cruelty.

Since, then, his crimes were of that class which are most directly against society, and since he appears at the time to have regarded them in that very relation, the question again recurs on the import of the phrase—“against thee, *thee only*, have I sinned.”

The following is the only possible solution. Notwithstanding his deep sense of his crime, as viewed in its social relation, he had such an overwhelming sense of its enormity as committed against God, that it threw into comparative obscurity the injury to man. And this deep sense of additional guilt, resulting from a violation of divine law, he could best express by the language, “against thee, *thee only*, have I sinned.” Stronger language could not be selected. The comparative degree of guilt is therefore the greatest that could be expressed.

Now, if this can be said of such sins as David was lamenting, it can be said of *all* sin. If murder and adultery are committed against *God only*, then surely sins less directly injurious to society, must be regarded in the same light. This language, therefore, dictated by the Divine Spirit, must afford ample authority for the following doctrine:—

The evil of sin consists chiefly in its being committed against God.

This doctrine does not, in the least degree, invalidate the obligations of mortals to each other; nor diminish the guilt of crimes, viewed merely in their social relation. Theft, murder, and every other act of aggression, is just as much to be reprobated as a violation of human rights, as if this further and chief consideration did not exist. And the man who considers the chief evil of sin to consist in a violation of divine obligations, has still as strong a view of social obligations, as he who overlooks all duty to God, and makes human injury, the only criterion of guilt. As a proof of this,

I observe, that the class of men who firmly believe in the righteous retributions of eternity on the guilty, are still as prompt as the universalist, or even the atheist, in according their amen to the penalty of human laws. This we should not expect, if their sense of human obligations was diminished by this view of the evil of sin against God.

That sin is an evil, so far as it infringes on the rights and happiness of fellow-mortals, is admitted by all. But the word of God compels us to believe, that the same aggressions are an immensely greater evil considered as offences against God. It is also to be considered, that his law pronounces many things sinful which do not appear to be violations of the mere rights of humanity at all. Such are profaneness, and a variety of other sins, in which transgressors are so ready to plead that they injure none but themselves.

We may see therefore at once, that a man will be likely to estimate his own guilt as every thing, or as nothing, just in proportion as he admits or rejects the doctrine before us. It is a doctrine of fundamental importance in religion. Indeed, next to the very existence of a God, and of a future state, I know not that a single point can be named from which there must necessarily radiate so powerful an influence through every part of a man's creed; or one which is so likely, in a radical manner, to affect his heart and life. Even the knowledge of a Saviour is of little use, if we are not made to feel our need of him, by feeling first the enormity of guilt; and it is perhaps wholly owing to the rejection of this doctrine, that any reject the true doctrine of Christ's character and work.

This vital importance of the doctrine itself, is my apology for the space I have occupied in its statement and explanation. I now proceed to corroborate the position, by adding the grounds of our paramount obligations to reverence and obey God. Should any one ask, "Why is it a thousand fold worse for me to murder my neighbour than if God had not forbidden it?" I answer,

1. *Because God is your Maker* Here is the highest obligation of which we can form a conception. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" With equal absurdity would he say to his Creator, why dost thou command me thus? We who are parents claim the right to command our children; and when they disobey, we place the main point of their offending in simple *disobedience*. We lay our prohibitions upon them in things which they already know to be wrong; and when they transgress, the burden of our indignation rests on their *disregard of our mandate*. But what is our boasted right to command them, compared with *God's* right to command us? And what is the aggravation of violating a parent's authority, compared with that of rebellion against the Eternal Father of our spirits!

2. *God sustains us.* In his hand our breath is, and his are all our ways. Having obtained help of God, we continue unto this time. From

the dawn of our existence to this hour, he has been mindful of us with more than a parent's tender care. Amid countless dangers, he has cast his shield about us. When one has fallen on our right hand and another on our left, he has said unto us, live. Each breath we draw thus increases our obligations to obey him. To break his commands to-day, is a greater sin than it was yesterday. To break them to-morrow will be a still deeper crime.

3. *He has encompassed us with countless blessings.* The earth itself is made for man. For us, it is beautified with flowers and verdure. For us it yields its increase. To us are given the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the fish of the sea. For us, the rivers flow, the oceans roll, the clouds distil, and the seasons keep their appointed times. His sun is made to light us by day, his moon and stars, by night. To shield us from cold, he has provided raiment—from heat, a shade—from storms, a shelter. He has constituted us social beings—with tongues that can speak—with ears that can discriminate—with hearts that can sympathize. Verily he hath done all things well for us. And shall we deny our obligations to keep his commandments?

4. *He has prepared a heaven for our eternal home.* His purposes for man's good are great and glorious, like his own infinite goodness. He who is the angels' Lord and our Brother, hath said, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" and he invites us to a residence, where are joys which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." It is the abode of his own infinite blessedness—the palace of his glory—and the home of holy angels.

5. When we had forfeited this bright heaven, and plunged ourselves in guilt and wo, *God gave his own dear Son to redeem us.* Notwithstanding the provocation to cut us off, and leave us for ever hopeless and miserable, it was with him a time of love. Beholding man thus cast out by his rebellion to the loathing of his person, he said, "Save him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." It was the blood of his only begotten Son. Thus hell was baffled—and heaven filled with wonder and joy. To achieve the work, it was needful that the Saviour take upon himself the form of a servant; be made under the law; pass a life of suffering and scorn; and finally be crucified by wicked hands. Yet to all this he submitted, not by constraint, but *willingly—nay, joyfully.* It was for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, despising the shame. This joy was the happiness and the glory of raising such miserable beings as we are, to the abodes of holiness and bliss. Where is the heart that can believe all this, and yet not own that sin, against such a God and such a Saviour, is an evil that baffles all description?

6. *God has given us a revelation, comprising the knowledge and motives requisite for the attainment of this great salvation.* And how is this sacred volume filled with entreaties to sinful man, to flee from the wrath to come,

and lay hold on the hope set before him. Nay, the very threatenings it contains are the admonitions of kindness. And how much has God done to preserve and extend his revelation. When man did not like to retain God in his knowledge, and sought out many inventions to blot truth from the earth, God has interposed to rescue his word from oblivion. The sea has not overwhelmed it. The flame of persecution has not consumed it. Truly, God is intent, for ever intent, on his purpose to save guilty mortals.

7. *He bears long with us, as a race of guilty beings, and as individuals.* It is because he is God and not man, that we are not consumed. How long has the earth been filled with violence, stained with blood, and darkened with impiety! From the fall of Adam to this hour, it has been the theatre of rebellion against Heaven. Why has not God swept it with the besom of destruction? Or why has he not left sin to work its own destruction, and to render this earth one vast and solitary waste? Why has he not left it to float darkly amid the better worlds of his creation, as a monument at once of the tendency of sin, and of his righteous indignation? And why does he bear with us as individuals, through long years of wilful obduracy? When he has given each one a fair opportunity of probation, and found him to choose darkness rather than light, why does he not consign him to darkness for ever? Each spared sinner is a perfect demonstration of the infinite goodness of God. And the aged impenitent is as great a monument of the divine forbearance, as he is of guilt. No one need range beyond the record of his own life, to find proof of the great evil and malignity of sin committed against such a God. I might speak of the awful guilt of sinning against the common, and the special influences of the Divine Spirit; but I need not multiply particulars.

I beseech you now, fellow-mortals, review each one of the foregoing topics by itself, and estimate, if you can, the weight of obligation it imposes on you to obey God. And when you have done this, apply yourself to the task of computing the combined obligation resulting from the whole. Then will you be prepared to judge, whether the doctrine of our text is supported by a view of the relations subsisting between man and his offended Creator. Then reflect, that against this same God, you have committed every sin that has polluted your life. Under this conviction, if your conscience be not dead, you cannot but exclaim with the Psalmist; *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

INFERENCES.

1. *The punishment denounced against the wicked, is manifestly just.* It is impossible to portray future punishment in more glowing colours, than those employed by the eternal Judge. And if he has not told us they shall suffer for ever, it is impossible for language to express the idea.

But the fact that such punishment is threatened, is much more obvious to guilty men, than its justice. The proud culprit has ever exhibited a strong propensity to deny its justice; and hence, either to question its reality or to impeach the character of God. Now, to rebuke and for ever to repress this propensity, I conceive God has himself settled the validity of this inference in the sense of our text. To the confession of his guilt as committed against *God only*, the Psalmist adds these remarkable words,—*That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* This is given in the shape of an inference, and as such we must receive it. What then is God thus to be justified in speaking? Is it merely a temporal punishment? There would be no need of this emphatic acknowledgment of sin as committed against God only, in order to justify him in *such* a penalty on such complicated guilt. Human laws inflict the greatest temporal punishment on such crimes considered only in their social relation; and all men pronounce it just. No, this strong language is fraught with meaning. God is pronounced just in *all* that he speaks against the transgressor, for *eternity* as well as for time. He is also “*clear when he judges.*” Here is essentially the same sentiment; but with a reference to the actual sentence. And at the last great day, God will be clear in the view of assembled worlds, in judging the sinner to just that retribution which he has already spoken. He that is filthy, is to be filthy still;—to be given over to a state of abandonment and woe, in which he will *sin* for ever and *suffer* for ever.

To ask whether God would be just to punish the sinner for ever, provided he should *cease to sin* in hell, is only to present a question of idle curiosity. But to deny that his law is just, and that himself will be clear in pronouncing that sentence which he has foretold, is to deny the obvious import of our text. The fact that makes all thus clear and just in God, is the commission of sin against *him*, and not merely against mortals. And let this thought once enter the mind and agonize the heart of a sinner, and he will no longer dream of impunity or of self-justification. David, comprehending in one view his crime against both God and man, has uttered the language of every contrite heart.

2. *There is not so great a difference, as men often imagine, between different kinds of sin.* I would not deny that “some sins in themselves are more heinous in the sight of God than others.” Nor would I at all intimate an equality of guilt among transgressors possessing different degrees of light, or actuated by different degrees of malignity. He that knows his Lord’s will and does it not, is to be beaten with many stripes, while the ignorant is to be beaten with few. But, committed in the like circumstances, there is not that difference in different *kinds* of sin which is often supposed. He that said, Do not kill, said also, Do not steal—and he said also, Do not profane the sabbath, nor covet, nor swear, nor indulge

an improper thought or idle word. The least commandments are sanctioned by the same authority as the greatest; and he who breaks any one of them, is guilty of setting at defiance the infinite God.

Now, we have seen that the chief evil of sin consists in its violation of divine obligation. Let no one then speak of small sins—little offences—and assign as his reason, that he injures no one but himself, that he does not infringe on the rights of his fellow-men. It is idle, and delusive, and impious to indulge in thus comparing and extenuating our crimes of rebellion against the infinite sovereign. Each sin, thus viewed, is of magnitude sufficient to sink a world.

All minor differences, then, in the sins of the same person in similar circumstances, are too trifling for distinction. There is indeed a great difference between the numbers one and two: but the difference between a million and a million and one, is lost in the comparison. So is it with our great and little sins. If then you would still insist on the comparison, you may rate your violation of divine obligation at a million, and if there is also a violation of human obligation in the same act, as there was in the case of David, you may rest assured that God will regard it according to its enormity.

In this light, O, impenitent sinner, be entreated to reflect on the countless sins you have heedlessly committed and quickly forgotten. They are all recorded for the day of judgment; and then you must answer for them, as so many acts of rebellion against the high and holy God. If you now shudder at the remembrance of a few startling crimes, what will be your feelings, when all your sins are exhibited in the light of eternity and in the immediate presence of your Judge!

3. *The most upright man is a great sinner.* Suppose him perfectly honest—exculpate him from falsehood—and say that he never injured the character or the feelings of any mortal.—A human tribunal would then acquit him. But where is he to be tried? At the bar of God. What then? Has he kept all God's commandments? Has he discharged the duties of piety to his Maker and Redeemer? Has he abstained from every sinful act and thought? Has he loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself? He has nothing but guilt to plead on every item.

Now, though God will not charge him with the circumstance of violating human obligations, where he has not been guilty of it, yet he will hold him guilty of violating all those infinitely more weighty obligations to the Sovereign of worlds.

And in vain will the man plead that these were in his estimation trivial sins;—that he was ignorant of their enormity. God has forbidden him, with the Bible in his hand, to remain in this wilful ignorance. We have seen the absurdity of such pleas; and the individual himself, if ever brought to a right view of the divine law, will see, as multitudes of the

like character have seen, that he is not only a sinner, but exceedingly sinful.

4. We are taught by this doctrine *our need of Christ's atonement*. Were sin merely an offence against man, the injury might admit of reparation by creatures. But to him who regards it, as David did, an offence against God, the necessity of a Divine atonement must be obvious. The evil is seen to be too inveterate in its nature, and too vast in magnitude, for a finite remedy. Thus it has in fact been seen and felt by many a mind once proud and skeptical.

And when a miserable sinner is thus brought to feel his need of the atonement, it is with unspeakable delight that he opens the sacred volume, and finds the glorious work already accomplished, and a ready pardon offered through that precious blood, without which there could be no remission of sins.

5. We see *the nature of true conviction*. It consists in seeing and feeling *the evil of sin as committed against God*. Fear of punishment is often mistaken for conviction: but it is really not even a necessary part of it. Real conviction does not cease at conversion, but increases with our growth in grace and knowledge of God. David, Isaiah, and Paul, appeared to feel it with increasing emotion, and to loathe and abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

But, on the other hand, a sinner may see that he has wronged man, and lament it: he may also see the gulf of perdition yawn for his reception, and shudder at the view: the terrors of hell may get hold upon him: and after all, if he has no proper sense of sin, as committed against a holy God, and justly exposing him to the threatened penalty, and leading him to feel his need of the atonement; he has the greatest reason to fear he has no true conviction, and no repentance unto life.

Happy for us, if we are now the subjects of this conviction and repentance. Miserable beyond conception, if we appear at the bar of God with our guilt upon our heads! For then, if not before, shall we see and feel, *that we have sinned against God only*, and that he is just when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth the impenitent to eternal burnings. O, then, too late, may we realize the awful import of those words, *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

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Go...Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XLV.

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AMERICAN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY JOHN H. RICE, D. D.

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THE POWER OF TRUTH AND LOVE.

2 COR. x. 4.—*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

A **CONTEST** is going on in this world, between holiness and sin ; religion and infidelity. The earth is a revolted province of Jehovah's empire, and bears many unequivocal marks of his displeasure. Yet he has not abandoned it to all the ruinous consequences of this unnatural rebellion : nor has he dealt with our race according to the demands of unmitigated justice. He is a father, as well as a sovereign ; and has adopted measures of grace to bring back his disobedient children to allegiance and love.

But man—and this shows the foulness of his revolt in the darkest colours—man has slighted this mercy, and even set himself in opposition to the “ Lord's Anointed.”

The *pride of the human heart* rejects the offer of salvation, as a free gift : an “ unpurchased heaven” is scorned by creatures who have no money, and can bring no price to their offended Creator.

The *pride of human reason* is offended with that truth which reason alone could not discover, and refuses to submit to the wisdom of the omniscient God. Man, in the blindness of his self-sufficiency, will not receive the testimony of the Holy One ; but demands a religion which he can demonstrate by his own ingenuity.

The *worldliness and sensuality* of man rejects and opposes a religion which places happiness in purity of heart, in love to God, and commu-

nion with him : which requires forgiveness, where the false honour of the world enjoins revenge ; humility, where the world talks of dignity ; mortification and self-denial, where the world permits indulgence.

These, and such as these, are the *strong holds* of which the Apostle speaks ; the *high things* which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and which it is the object of all, who are engaged in this warfare, to pull down, and bring into captivity, and completely to subdue to the obedience of Christ.

But with what weapons girded, are the soldiers of the cross to go forth to the assault of these fortresses ? And how are they to accomplish their great work ? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." When men, in the proud spirit of the world, undertake to subdue their enemies, the first thought ordinarily is, to employ *force*. They love to see their adversaries quailing, and bowing down under their superior strength. But not so do the servants of Jesus Christ, when engaged in his work.

The men of the world endeavour, also, by *authority*, to bring the understanding and the will of their fellow-men into subserviency to their wishes. And nothing is more grateful to the human heart, than to gratify its desires, and to execute its devices, by commanding the obedience of others. But Christ does not permit his ministers so to fulfil his purposes.

When force and authority fail, corrupt men next resort to *stratagem* ; and endeavour to overreach by cunning, those whom they can neither subdue by force, nor overawe by authority. Or, when all these measures fail, they employ the bait which tempts *avarice* ; and bribery accomplishes what neither power, nor authority, nor policy could effect.

These are the arts to which ambitious and wicked men have recourse, and for the successful practice of which, they receive the applause of the world. But all these are carnal weapons ; and religion rejects their use with holy indignation.

True, indeed, men who have worn the garb, and borne the title of Christ's ambassadors, in utter disregard of "the great Master's law," have been forward to adopt the forbidden measures of worldly policy ; and even to seek alliance with the adversary, for the purpose of obtaining carnal weapons, wherewith to maintain their unholy warfare. The arms of the soldier, the authority of the king, and the wiles of the statesman, have been employed by ambitious clergymen, to accomplish their selfish designs. Heaven has seen with horror, and hell with joy, the misnamed and misbelieving heralds of the Prince of peace, propagating a pretended Christianity by the dungeon and the sword, by fire and?

fagot, by fraud and chicanery, and every trick of sordid policy. Men have been cheated, and bribed, and beaten, and imprisoned, and burned, to make them Christians!—Inexpressible wickedness! And absurd as wicked.

But where the power of a wise government, or the progress of knowledge among the people, or, what is most efficient of all, *the influences of vital religion*, have prevented the practice of such abominations, unholy ministers of the gospel have resorted to other expedients, under the pretext of promoting Christianity; but in reality for the purpose of extending their own influence, and securing their own interests. Sectarian zeal has kindled its unhallowed fires; and they who had little regard for genuine piety, have been roused to most vigorous efforts in advancing the cause of a party. “The Church”—“Orthodoxy”—“Water”—“Fire”—and the like, have been the *watchwords*, or rather the *war-cry*, of different sects of Christians, and have roused them, as the notes of the trumpet, which has often called the old warrior to battle. But all measures of this kind are disowned by the religion of Christ. His ministers, imbued with his Spirit, and pursuing the course prescribed by him, do not need, and cannot employ them.

The reason is obvious:—*True religion has its seat in the soul*; its influences bear on the heart and conscience. But not one of all these measures has the least power to awaken and regulate the conscience, or purify the heart. And until this is done, nothing is done:—not one effectual step is taken in the great work of saving sinners. Force, indeed, can confine or crush the body:—authority may restrain the actions, and even overawe the mind;—wealth can bribe;—party-spirit may kindle up fiery zeal; but the heart remains unsanctified; the sinner is still in his sins. One may as well think to bind the tempest in chains, and lightning in fetters of iron, as by the use of carnal weapons to subdue men to the faith of Christ.

Yet religion *has* weapons, which are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and humbling high thoughts. The character of Christianity clearly indicates their nature. It is a religion which consists not in external form and observance: for “the kingdom of God is within you”—in the soul. And the high enterprise of the Christian minister, is to win over the soul to the obedience of the just. In order to this, *truth must shed its light on the understanding, and exert its sanctifying influence on the heart*. But it is truth only, as invested with God’s authority, which can do this. The reasoning of man is in vain for such a work. There must be “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” And this may be expected only *when the truth is delivered as God re-*

vealed it, and in the *spirit and manner prescribed by the great Head of the church.*

The truth is preached as God revealed it, when the meaning of the Bible is stated, and *proved*, and pressed on the sinner's heart;—when sinners are made to understand *just what God tells them*, and that they are bound to believe and obey, *because God has told them*. If man assumes authority, his fellow feels that he has a right to refuse obedience; if *man* reasons, his fellow feels that he has a right to reason on the other side of the question, and to withhold belief:—but if *God speaks*, and the meaning of what he says is clearly exhibited, then there is no subterfuge;—man must obey, or come to the direct and fearful determination, that he will disregard the authority of Heaven.

But *much*, according to divine appointment, is made to depend on the *spirit* in which the truth is preached. God, in employing human instrumentality to promote religion, determined to carry on the work of grace, in accordance with the nature which he had originally given to man. He did not, therefore, propose truth in abstract forms to the understanding—cold as an icicle in the bosom—but with its light intermingled the genial warmth of love. God is love: truth is an emanation of Deity; and it is the warmth and energy of love, which carries it to the heart, when torpid and cold in spiritual death. It was, therefore, a wise and gracious determination of our compassionate Redeemer, to use all the kindly and generous feelings of human nature, every thing in man that has power to melt and subdue the heart of man, to extend the influences of his religion. The Christian minister, then, in his warfare, not only opposes truth to error, but blessing to cursing; gentleness to violence; pity to contempt; humility to haughtiness; patience to insult; forgiveness to injury; and love to hatred.

But it was manifestly the design of the Saviour, to give to the instrumentality employed in promoting his religion, the moral influence acquired by the *association of numbers in one body*. It is true, that one man, like Paul, highly endowed with genius, ardent in feeling, full of courage, unshrinking in fortitude, versatile in talent—taken up to the third heaven, and sent thence, like a comet from the sun, beaming with light from the ineffable glory, and burning with the fires of heavenly love, will exert a mighty influence on the moral condition of the whole world. But even Paul, after all his visions and celestial raptures, still derived aid and courage from the faithful men, who, through his instrumentality, were brought into the church. And he manifestly relied much, under God, on the zeal, and love, and effort of Christians *acting in unison*.

Hence we see the nature and extent of the instrumentality to be

employed in propagating the gospel. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, both ministers and people, enlightened by divine truth, and moved by holy love, exert all their influence to impress *this truth* on the hearts of their fellow-men, softened and subdued by *this love*. **THIS IS THE LEGITIMATE METHOD OF PROMOTING THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.** There is no other. No case, either of individual or associated enterprise, can furnish an exception to the rule. When one, in the true spirit of the gospel, makes his first attempt to bring sinners to Christ, he dare not, for his life he dare not, adopt any other measure than in love to speak the truth which God has revealed. And when he makes his last and greatest effort, he can do nothing more. He has no weapons of higher temper, or more celestial force, with which to assault and pull down the strong holds, and the high things, which exalt themselves against the law of Christ. If he resort to other means, he at once throws himself out of the list of approved warriors of the cross, and fights under false colours. He uses carnal weapons. His success is not that of the cause of Christ. The places which he wins, he does not annex to the kingdom of the Redeemer. Nothing but truth and love can make men real Christians. God blesses nothing else.

Once, when the church, though a very feeble band, went forth against the whole world, with no defensive armour but that of righteousness, under no protection but that of God, wielding no weapon of offence but the sword of the Spirit, our doctrine was fully recognised, and carried out into action. And the strongest holds of the powers of darkness felt the first shock, to their deepest foundations: and the first clash of the opposing weapons, showed that the church wielded the sword of Michael, the touch of which "neither keen nor solid could resist"—and one high thing after another was brought down, and subdued to the obedience of Christ. At length, in an evil hour, this armour was laid aside; one of earthly fabrication and temper was used in its stead; and the enemy recovered much of his lost dominion.

In these latter ages, there has been a revival, in some measure, of the spirit of primitive Christianity; and the church is again heard to declare, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Her ministers are seen going forth, as in the beginning, protected by the shield of faith, and wielding only the sword of the Spirit; and just in proportion as they do this, the kingdom of God is extended among men.

From this brief discussion may be drawn some principles of great importance to the general cause of Christian benevolence; and of course to those particular interests which claim our attention on the present occasion.

I. RELIGION MAY BE MOST SUCCESSFULLY PROPAGATED, WHERE IT IS PERFECTLY FREE FROM ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY.

For, since religion has its seat in the soul, and is a matter of conviction and feeling, no man can possibly be a Christian, any farther than he voluntarily and heartily embraces the truth, and feels its sanctifying power.

But every man's heart rises in opposition to *constraint*. It is universally felt, that he who attempts to impose it, is doing what he has no right to do. And when even the truth itself is urged by human authority or force, it has to encounter not only the natural resistance of the corrupt heart, but the repugnance superadded by the absurd attempt to compel conviction and force the conscience. None can tell how much influence the church has lost by such preposterous measures.

Again ; whenever religion is shackled by human policy, there is always some entangling alliance between it and "the powers that be." The state, for instance, engages to support the church : but it is on the condition that the church will submit to the authority of the state. Now, the rulers of this world, generally, have purposes of their own to accomplish, by means of religion : so far they support it ; but no farther. It enters not at all into their plans, to submit themselves and their greatness to the power of the gospel. Nor are they willing, that its divine authority over others should be pushed too far. Accordingly, the wily politician has always invented checks and balances, by which to lessen the force, and control the influence, of Christian doctrines, and ordinances, and teachers. The most solemn rites of religion, connected as they are with truths of the most affecting and awful character, have often been desecrated by an application to measures of state policy. The temporal head of the church prescribes the methods to be pursued for the promotion of piety : the officers of the church are appointed by patronage : no public prayers must be offered, no doctrine preached, but such as the ruling power has previously approved. Who does not see, that in this case, the main-spring of religious action is greatly weakened ?

But if the nature of the alliance between state and church is such, that none are too high for her discipline ; then every expedient, which long practice in the wiles of courts and stratagems of law can suggest, is resorted to for the purpose of corrupting doctrine, and destroying discipline : and the state is felt as an incubus on the bosom of the church, causing her life-blood to stagnate, and diffusing a benumbing influence through every member.

The whole history of religion supports these positions ; and fully warrants the general conclusion, that although superstition may greatly prevail, where no religious liberty is enjoyed, yet evangelical piety most abounds where the freedom of religion is most fully secured.

But, while we "prize beyond all price" this privilege, we wish to be fully understood, when we speak of *freedom of conscience*. It is not the right to cast off all religious obligation, and live as we list ; the right to set at naught the authority of God, and renounce allegiance to Heaven ; to take from his parental throne the Father of all ; to make the universe without object or end, and man a being without hope, or reason of existence ;—in a word, it cannot mean a *right to have no conscience at all*.—Nevertheless, it is admitted, that if one resolves so to degrade his own nature, and blight all his best hopes, and suppress all his finest feelings, *he can do so* ;—and if no overt act of his disturb the order and peace of society, there is no rightful authority in man, to inflict punishment to restrain these baleful opinions. Religion disowns all carnal weapons for arresting even these portentous evils—*She opposes them only by truth and love*.

But by freedom of conscience we mean, the unrestrained enjoyment, by one who feels his obligations to his gracious and almighty Maker, of the right to worship him according to his convictions of truth and duty ; and to do whatever he may think incumbent on him, both in his individual and social capacity, for promoting piety and good will on earth : provided that in so doing, he interferes not with the rights of others.

Now, when this is the happy lot of the Christian, he is precisely in the condition to feel, in full force, all the powerful motives of Christianity. Believing the Bible to be God's truth, without mixture of error, he feels as though God were speaking in his word, directly to his conscience : the truth comes to him clothed with divine authority ; and no inventions of men intervene to lessen its force.—The awe of God's majesty pervades him ; the sanctions of eternity press his conscience ; the worth of the soul, the misery of fallen man, a Saviour's redeeming love, the joys of salvation, the glories of heaven, the horrors of perdition, apply their highest and holiest stimuli to his heart. Yet fully understanding that God's religion, is a religion of beneficent action, his excitement is not expended in mere effusions of feeling, but in doing good—the utmost possible good. The truths of the gospel, in all their awful grandeur and eternal majesty, are his motives ; the honour of his Redeemer, and the happiness of his fellow-men, are his objects.

Now this is precisely the condition contemplated by the Apostle, when he says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty." The Christian freeman is not only, as was said, in a situation

to see the fullest power of Christian motives ; *but is accustomed to act under their influence.* His whole course is one of voluntary agency, prompted by enlightened views of truth, and a deep feeling of its value.—He understands the worth of religion for himself, his family, his country, the world :—and, therefore, cheerfully bestows his money, his time, and his influence, to support religious institutions, and enlarge the sphere of Christian benevolence. It is all, with him, a matter of deep reflection ; of profound consideration of human interests ; of hearty good will. Similar views and feelings draw men together. They take counsel, deliberate calmly, and act in concert, under convictions of truth and duty. They act too with energy. The power of eternal truth conspires with the vigour of *voluntary action* ; the whole strength is put forth in every effort—and the labour is not in vain. The history of Bible and Missionary Societies, *as voluntary associations*, formed within the last thirty years, shows, better than a thousand arguments, the truth and value of our principle. And here, brethren, is the true secret of evangelizing the world. *The mighty work is to be done by voluntary associations, formed on the unalterable principle of using no carnal weapons ; of preaching nothing but the simple gospel of Christ ; in no spirit but that of Christian love.*

It deserves to be remarked, too, and remembered, that associations, counsels, united efforts, such as these, promote intelligence, order, peace, and in a word, all that blesses and adorns human nature. One may see their happy influence spreading through the youth, the manhood, and the old age, of every community where they exist. There all is healthful and active ;—all is life, and hope, and joy.

But if one asks, why this scene is not fully realized in our country, where religion is perfectly free ; I answer—*it is going on to be so.* But, from the nature of man, moral causes operate slowly ; and time must be allowed for the production of their full effect—especially where counteracting causes are in full activity. Our forefathers, unavoidably, brought with them many of the habits, feelings, and principles of the countries from which they came : they brought, with their good things, the fatal policy of using carnal weapons ; of mingling the church and state ; of employing human authority instead of the authority of the Bible : they brought the spirit of fierce contention for doctrine, and with it, in many instances, that deathlike coldness in regard to vital religion, which had, during a long period, spread through the churches of Europe. Now all these evils were to be done away ; and the people brought *right under* the full influences of Bible truth, before they would pursue the course marked out by the Apostles, and trodden by their immediate disciples. *This was not the work of a day.*

The spirit of infidelity, too, has been imported into our country; and that dread of the influence of religion, which has arisen from its perversion and abuse in other lands. These have been so great, as, in the minds of many, to justify the natural repugnance of the human heart to religion. And opposition has been made—it is still made—to its propagation, both in this country and abroad. Suspicions are entertained of its friends, and sinister objects are attributed to all their plans of Christian benevolence.

But—everlasting praise be given to God!—this opposition has been overruled for good: and still greater good will hereafter be educed from it. It was, perhaps, the very thing which the church needed, to make her see and feel, that carnal weapons cannot be safely or efficiently used in her warfare; and that, although invincible and invulnerable, when clad in the armour of righteousness, she is weak and defenceless, without it. In other countries, when pressed by her enemies, and feeling her weakness, she looks to the arm of flesh for protection. Here she is pressed by the wholesome necessity of putting “to silence the ignorance of foolish men, *by well doing* ;” she is obliged to act in such way, that if her enemies speak evil of her, they must speak falsely. She can do nothing, but go forth in the spirit of her redeeming Lord, and proclaim the truth in love, and stretch out her hands in prayer for the blessing of the Almighty. *And this is the very thing which God intended she should do.* In the sure, but silent operation of moral causes, this truth will yet be more clearly seen, more deeply felt, and more fully acted on, in this country: and there will be great improvements in the measures adopted for promoting religion in the world; and great increase in the efficiency of the means employed. No new truth indeed will be discovered in religion. That which was heard from the beginning, which the eyes of apostles saw, and which their hands handled of the word of life, will be proclaimed through every age, until Jesus Christ shall come the second time: nor will there be a discovery of any new principles of action, in pulling down the strong holds of sin, and building up the kingdom of Christ. But the disciples of Christ will just do, what the Saviour has always told them to do: and the ministers of religion will go and tell the people what the Bible means, and thus make them understand what God has said, and done, and requires. And they will so breathe the love of God, that the people will feel its heavenly warmth;—and God will honour his own word;—and it shall have free course and be glorified.

Is it presumptuous to suppose, that one great end which God had in view, in—I had almost said—revealing this country to our forefathers, and freeing it from all foreign authority, and establishing here complete

religious liberty, was, that the church might be restored to her primitive purity, and have a full opportunity of learning again the true method of promoting religion; and that the Bible might recover all its lost honours? Did not God intend, by sustaining the cause of rational liberty, during the revolutions and fearful convulsions of half a century, to afford new facilities for discovering the entire energy of true religion; and showing by what instrumentality, and by what mode of using that instrumentality, every strong hold in the whole empire of sin is to be pulled down; and the city of God built up, in all its beauty and glory? And is not this work going on? Do we not see that, wherever liberty is enjoyed, there also is now displayed, in some degree, the energy of the Bible and Missionary cause? And that wherever men go, with the simple purpose of declaring the truth of God; and where they clearly state the meaning of the Bible, there sound revivals of religion take place? God is teaching us important lessons: and it is every day becoming more apparent, that they who are contending for the mere dry bones of theology, or the outward forms of religion, or for ecclesiastical authority, are digging the grave for their own favourite systems—while, every where, the blessing of Heaven attends efforts made in the true spirit of the gospel.

Providence has placed us in a situation very peculiar, in a country, where, as far as the mighty influences of religion are concerned, nothing has authority or power but the Bible. This is more and more seen, every year. And when it shall be fully understood, that among the teeming millions of our country there is nothing to regulate the awful energies of the religious principle, but the authority of the word of God, the Bible will be studied with an intensity of interest, and used with a fidelity of application, as yet unknown in these latter days. And it will carry its authority more entirely through every department of the church, than has ever been witnessed since the days of the Apostles. The truth will then go with lightning glance and electric force, from heart to heart, and from land to land—and the earth be soon filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord.

This leads to a second general proposition, deduced as an inference from the preceding.

II. IT IS PECULIARLY THE DUTY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS, TO ENLIST AND COMBINE THEIR ENERGIES FOR EVANGELIZING THE WORLD.

1. *We owe it to Him, who is both King in Zion, and Lord of the whole earth, to perform our part of this service.*—It is his gracious providence, which has placed us in the peculiarly favourable situation which we

have just considered. He has removed every yoke from our necks, separated us from every restraining influence; and given us the fullest opportunity, ever enjoyed by any people, to put forth all our strength, to show the entire power of religion, regulated by nothing but divine truth. The gospel finds us in circumstances more happy, in these respects, than those of any other people, from the time when the heavenly hosts sang their song of glory and of peace, at the advent of the Messiah, to this day. And we owe it all to God. The Head of the Church has ordered it so.

Now, according to the religion of Christ, every opportunity of doing good, brings with it a corresponding obligation. And as our opportunities are peculiarly favourable, so our obligations are peculiarly weighty. We are more bound than any other people on the face of the earth, to advance the cause of the Redeemer, in proportion to our means and numbers. Heavy, indeed, will be our reckoning, and terrible the visitations of justice, should we fail—great our glory and felicity, should we feel the extent of our obligations, and bring our conduct up to the measure of duty.

2. *We owe it to our country, to make her a blessing among the nations of the earth.*—The world has seen enough of the glory of war, and the honour of warriors. The desideratum in the great community of nations is *one people* which, without ambition and the pride of conquest, shall stand forth an example of the mild virtues of justice, mercy, and piety. Mankind have suffered enough from “wars and fighting.” Smitten with unnumbered evils, the human race is sighing for the reign of peace. The world needs the moral influence of a great nation, where public sentiment is sanctified; and whence shall emanate a blessing, to be felt wherever the winds of heaven and the waves of ocean can bear its inhabitants. This will weave a garland of higher fragrance, and more unfading colours, than any which the warrior or the statesman can wreath round the brow of his country. It will do more, too, for national security, than any thing else which the wit of man can devise. For every thing depends on national character. To this, free institutions communicate energy, activity, versatility, and great richness of resources; but nothing can purify it, and raise it to a lofty tone, and sustain it, except true religion. When an individual, under the influence of Christianity, is brought up to the determination that he *will be a benefactor to his fellow-men*, his character is formed according to a high standard, and is fixed on a sure foundation. So with a nation: let the great body of the people in a free Christian country resolve that they will bless the whole world—that their liberality shall send the pure gospel to all the benighted tribes of men—and the national character is elevated; a spec-

table of moral grandeur is exhibited, which angels must contemplate with rapture.

8. *We owe it to the nations of the earth, to send them the blessings of salvation.*—Religion teaches that the human race constitutes one family. God hath mingled of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the whole earth. And Christianity obliges us to recognize this common brotherhood; “to do good, and to communicate.” Among pagan nations, *alien* and *enemy* are synonymous terms. But the religion revealed by the common Father of men, acknowledges all as his children; and enforces, by all the sanctions of eternal love and justice, the duty of doing all the good we can, to every part of the human family. No matter what curse of colour or condition has been inflicted; no matter what form of misery weighs down the sufferer; no matter how low he is sunk in the scale of wretchedness; the only question we have to ask is, Can we do good to him without injury to another? And the answer determines the measure of our duty.

But if we cannot, *separately*, do the good which the Bible tells us must be done; we can do it *collectively*. According to the gospel rule, this is enough to show that it is our duty to *unite* for that purpose. And all the knowledge, the wisdom, the energy of our best men, ought to bear on this mighty subject of co-operation, among American Christians, for evangelizing the world. I do not presume to undertake so great a theme. I only throw out a few hints, to show the incalculable importance of the object.

The moral power of a people is in the compound ratio of their liberty, intelligence, and virtue. Of this England affords striking evidence. She is inferior, in population and territory, to many other countries: but not so in influence on the affairs of the world. The United States present another instance. Our remote situation from other civilized nations, and the greenness of our youth being considered, the influence of our country, on the public sentiment of the world, is truly astonishing. Spain began her work of colonizing the Southern Continent, before England planted settlements in North America. Yet, now, the United States exert greater moral influence on the world, than all of Spanish name or blood in Europe and America. The reason is, we have liberty; we have the religion of the Bible; we have general education.

But the influence of our country rapidly increases. Our population grows at the rate of more than a thousand a day. With this, there is an equally rapid increase in the facilities of intercourse, between the nations of the earth. Half the distance between this country and Europe has been annihilated, within the last five and twenty years. During

that period, our population has risen from six to twelve millions. Look forward twenty-five, fifty, a hundred years. When the population of our country shall equal that of all Europe, who can calculate the extent of her influence? It will emanate from the intellectual and moral character of the people. It will take its colouring from our religion. According to the principles of obligation laid down in the gospel, this country does indeed owe, and long will owe, a deep debt to mankind. Its amount must be determined by our moral power, as a people, of affecting their interests. And verily it is not small. Free, educated, with the Bible in our hands, and nothing to prevent its full influence on our hearts; at perfect liberty to meet in any numbers, and consult on any measures; there is nothing here to hinder the entire concentration of all the resources of the church. And I cannot help repeating, that American Christians are in the best possible condition to do good, precisely in the way in which most good can be done; to use just the weapons of warfare which apostles found to be mighty; to go in the simplicity of the gospel, with the single-heartedness of truth and love, and carry to our perishing fellow-men, the blessings of salvation. Indeed we are debtors to the world. The Head of the church has brought this great debt upon us, *and it must be paid*. Now, how shall we pay it? This is the question for most solemn consideration; and let none put it off; *for the debt must be paid*.

4. *We owe it to the universal church of Christ, to do our part in carrying forward his cause, and accomplishing his purposes of mercy in the world.*

As there is but one true religion, so there is but one church of the Lord Jesus Christ among men. The obligation to send the gospel to every creature rests on the whole body of the faithful. They must see to it, that the messages of mercy are sent to the ends of the earth. All must do their part of this work of love. But as God has placed us in a situation peculiarly favourable to our feeling the full power of religious truth, and so of being peculiarly holy, and peculiarly devoted to the cause of our gracious Redeemer; so the church at large, and the world, ought to be made to see and feel our warmer piety, our higher and holier zeal, our more expansive benevolence.

For ages, the true method of promoting religion had been sadly misunderstood. And when Providence placed the church in America on its own resources, the general expectation was, that we should become a nation of infidels. And even now, thousands in the world imagine that religion cannot live and flourish without the fostering care of civil government. America, therefore, owes it to the universal interests of the church, and to that method of promoting religion, which must be

every where adopted, before religion can have universal sway, to be very holy, very zealous, very benevolent—to undertake enterprises on a scale which measures the earth, and to demonstrate that they can be accomplished by the power of truth and love. The church in this country must not only sustain herself, and purify the nation, but she must stretch out her arms, and make the whole world feel the strong embrace of her benevolence.

There are Christians enough now in the United States—if they will only throw aside every carnal weapon, and take the whole armour of God, and go forth in their strength—to subvert all the ancient foundations of error; and pull down all the strong holds of sin; and erect the standard of the cross over every demolished temple of idolatry; and pour the light of life into every dark habitation of cruelty, in the whole world.

“ These weapons of our holy war,
Of what almighty force they are !”

The world does not know it yet :—the church does not fully understand it. The omniscience of God’s word, the omnipotence of God’s truth, only need be fully appreciated, to show that the church has resources, which render the evangelizing the world a reasonable enterprize.

III. THE VIEWS WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN OF OUR SUBJECT, SHOW HOW UNFOUNDED ARE THE SUSPICIONS AND JEALOUSIES WHICH ARE ENTERTAINED OF THE MISSIONARY CAUSE, AND HOW UNWARRANTABLE IS THE OPPOSITION MADE TO IT.

They who are engaged in this cause, declare in presence of their Maker, and before the world, that they renounce the use of all carnal weapons : that they acknowledge the lawfulness of no measures, but such as Christ and his apostles approved. A single sentence expresses their means and measures—they *speak the truth in love*. They, indeed, feel horror at opposition made to the pure and benevolent religion of the gospel ; but they are entirely willing—nay, earnestly desirous, that the use of any means or methods of extending its influence, different from those appointed in the Bible, may be denounced, and exposed. And the more clearly, the better. For they wish only to know what God teaches, and to do what God commands.

That perfect religious liberty, too, which is secured to Christians of this country, is regarded by them as all-important, nay, necessary to the success of their enterprise. The full and free use of their weapons requires it : deprived of it, indeed, they could not put forth half their strength. Indeed, should revivals of religion proceed as they lately

have done ; and the church go forward as she has gone ; it is a thousand times more probable, that the enemies of religion will endeavour to lay restraints on conscience, than that her friends in this country will seek an alliance with the ruling powers. And truly the indications are already such, as may well rouse up Christian jealousy. Let the church be awake, and watchful of the liberty with which God has blessed her. Many already show that they want nothing but power, to break up every plan of religious benevolence which Christians have formed, and scatter their resources to the winds of heaven. But, brethren, stand fast, and fear not. The God of benevolence is with us—the Lord of hosts is our refuge, and our weapons are of everlasting strength. We will hope by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and allay all evil suspicion of our designs. But should opposition increase, sooner will we part with all that we hold dear in life, and with life itself, than relinquish the privilege of labouring without hinderance, in our Lord's vineyard ; of pursuing our efforts to glorify God, and bless mankind, in the way pointed out in the Bible.

Opposition is altogether unreasonable. Express its true character, and it amounts to this :—‘ You shall not, if it can be prevented, carry the truths of the gospel to the heathen. You shall not turn them from their base and foul idolatry to the living God. You shall not convert them from their impure and bloody rites, to the pure and spiritual worship of the Holy One. Their licentiousness, their dark fanaticism, their human sacrifices, and all their hopelessness shall continue. The morality, the doctrine, the hope of the gospel shall not be made known to them. They shall never hear the voice of mercy, nor see the light of life. But the unabated curse shall rest on them, and they shall wither and die under it for ever.’ Redeemer of men ! why should the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together against thee, the Lord's Anointed ? What spirit possesses the enemies of thy cause—the cause of truth ; of love ; of heaven ?

But let us pause a moment, to look at the subject a little more minutely. See one of our villages—not that one, where an infidel lawyer and physician have stationed themselves, to live on the vices, and (the proper fruits of vice,) the diseases of their fellow-men ; where gambling, and the tricks of gamblers, are made to supply the place of knowledge and industry ; and where ardent spirit brings in its legion of devils to possess and to destroy. Alas ! the faithful missionary is needed there, as much as in the islands of the sea ! But turn from this odious place, to that, where the people, appreciating the value of religion, have chosen for themselves, a pious, learned, and faithful minister, to teach them and their children, the doctrine of Christ and the way to heaven ; where grandsires, just

on the verge of heaven, repeat old Simeon's song, and then look on children, and on children's children, following in the same path to the Mount Zion above ; where fathers hold forth the word of life by a holy example, before their families ; and mothers enforce the lesson by all the sweetness of female piety ; where the young are strong to do good, and find their pleasures in the fulfilment of their duty ; and where lisping infancy is taught to sing hosannas to the Son of David. O, what a scene of loveliness ! Here are the charities of domestic, and the kindness of social life. Here peace descends like the dew of Hermon : and love, like the holy oil, which consecrated God's high priest, diffuses its blessedness through the whole society. Here are heard the inspiring notes of hope, and the higher strains of heavenly joy—Nor need we wonder ; for heaven is here begun on earth. Now contrast this scene, with the ignorance, the tyranny, the licentiousness, the cruelty, the debasement, the brutality of heathenism !—Well ; it is the object of the missionary enterprise, to shed light into all those dark habitations of cruelty ; to pour through those sinks of sin the purifying waters of salvation ; to awaken love in the hearts of the cruel, and hope in the bosoms of the wretched ; to give the bread of life to the perishing, and salvation to the lost. And must this work of love, in this land of light, have to encounter the fierce and steady opposition of determined enemies !—Father forgive them, for they know not what they do !

But the work must be done—and it will be done. God has said it. The church has heard his voice ; and is girding on her armour of heavenly proof ; and is going forth in the name and spirit of her Redeemer ; and the Lord goes before her. Every mountain shall be levelled, and every valley shall be exalted ; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth ; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God : and all kindreds and tribes of men on earth, and the ransomed in heaven, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, and the cherubim and seraphim, that stand in presence of the divine glory, in strains,

“ Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy,”

shall celebrate the everlasting triumphs of Truth and Love.

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt xxviii. 19.

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SERMONS XLVI. & XLVII.

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ON PRAYING FOR ALL IN AUTHORITY.

1 TIMOTHY, II. 1, 2.—*I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;—for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*

PRAYER, however natural and familiar, depends for its right performance and hope of prevalence with God, on a revelation from himself. Without such instruction, we should not have known either how, or when, or where, or for what to pray—we should not have known whether prayer was at all acceptable, or if accepted, to what degree it would avail. How can a child of nature know, that God, in the highest heavens, encircled with celestial society, *engaged* in celestial employments, will regard his prayer? How shall he know that even God can help him, and that fate is not stronger than any power above? If he believe that God can help him—how shall he know in what way the government of the universe is distributed, and blessings obtained? Shall he consult the experience and usages of *nations*? They have worshipped a thousand different gods, in many thousand different forms. Shall he avail himself of the genius and wisdom of *poets* and *philosophers* to relieve his anxieties? Some reply, that the gods exercise no control over events below—that their attention is confined to heaven and heavenly things. Others, that their administration extends indeed to earth, but only to its mightier concerns. Socrates and Pythagoras tell him, it is not safe to pray for any particular thing, because no man knows what is good for him. Others tell him, he should not pray at all, but silently leave all to the divine disposal. Thus is the child of nature more and more bewildered the farther he explores—involved in doubts, or cut off from all sympathy, and hope, and comfort. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” We need divine instruction: and we have it—clear, ample, and comforting—in the Sacred Scriptures. “Ask and ye shall receive.” Nor need we “ask amiss.” How thankful, then, should we be for the instruction we have received—how careful to improve each divine direction. In the text before us, is distinct

light on one object of prayer—an object which involves the interests of ourselves and our children—of our country, and the church of God. We would, therefore, invite you to a serious consideration of **THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF PRAYING “FOR ALL IN AUTHORITY.”** We shall consider this much neglected duty,

I. AS A MATTER OF DIVINE STATUTE ;

II. AS BENEFICIAL IN ITS OPERATION.

First, *The Divine Statute.* “I exhort, that *first of all, supplications,* (i. e. deprecations of impending judgments.) *prayers,* (petitions for temporal and spiritual good things,) *intercessions,* (addresses to God, that he would defend and support the faithful, or convert and save their enemies,) *giving of thanks,* (grateful ascriptions for mercies conferred,) *be made in reference to all men—for kings, and for all that are in authority,* (clothed with office, legislative, executive, judicial, civil or military.)

It may be surmised, that the statute was local and *temporary*—adapted to the Jewish character, and the former condition of Christianity. It is true, that the Jews were characterized by an intolerable national **pride**, and ever bore the yoke of subjection to a heathen master, with peculiar restlessness and aversion ; and that their final refusal to offer at the temple, the customary sacrifices in behalf of the Roman emperor, was the signal of insurrection, revolt, and war, which ended in the destruction of temple and nation. It is also true, that the Gospel was first preached to Jews—the first Christian church was mainly composed of Jews—the first ambassadors of Christ were Jews—and all Christians, of whatever nation, resembled Jews, in worshipping an omnipresent Spirit, and opposing the polytheism and idolatry of Rome in all its forms. And the most learned Roman historians of those ages appear ignorant of the broad distinction between Christian and Jew. It may be admitted that Christians, as they were liable to be involved in the suspicions and odium attached to the Jews, had need of peculiar caution, to make it manifest, that they possessed another—a meek and benevolent spirit. The change that Christianity was about to make in the religion of the Roman empire, and the persecution Christianity was about to sustain on this account, as well as for its holy and uncompromising spirit, rendered it necessary, that a sect “every where spoken against,” should manifest a *loyal* and benevolent disposition, in “praying for kings and for all in authority.” But all these considerations only show, that the precept was *peculiarly* necessary in those times ; and not, that it was unnecessary in all others. Many Christian precepts and duties, ever binding and important, are more especially so, under peculiar circumstances, as often as these may occur. But there are features in the statute which show it to have been originally designed for general and permanent authority. It was given to Timothy, who was invested with power to “set in order” the things of the Church, and display its

appropriate character. It is introduced among general principles—laws of universal and permanent application—has its place in the lasting records of the church. It is announced in a manner which conveys most impressively its pre-eminent importance—“ I exhort,” urge, “ first of all.” The prayer it enjoins is leisurely detailed in all its variety—“ supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks.” The duty is proposed first in general terms, involving an extent surely not temporary and local.—“ for all men ;”—then, emphatically and restrictively—“ for kings and for all in authority.” It is accompanied with motives, surely not local and temporary—“ that we,” the church, “ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty”—“ for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour”—“ who will have all men to be saved.”

Further, the duty is *not novel*, and *was never understood* by the ancient Christian church, to be local and temporary. The Jews in their Babylonian bondage were directed of God to “ seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and to pray unto the Lord for it ; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.” This practice of prayer for their actual sovereigns, whether Persian, Egyptian, or Roman, was continued till the last fatal revolt which “ took away their place and nation.” The ancient Christians felt this law, contained in our text, to be constantly and universally binding ; and therefore ever scrupulously “ prayed for all in authority,” whether Pagan, Arian, or Christian. The custom is mentioned by Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen, Athénagoras, and Lactantius. It is found in all the ancient Liturgies. The early apologists refer to it as a proof of Christian submission and loyalty—“ We continually,” say they, “ pour forth supplications and prayers, for driving away your enemies, procuring rain, and either for removing or moderating your calamities ; and we pray instantly and incessantly day and night, for your peace and safety—appeasing God and rendering him propitious unto you.” Against the charge of Celsus, one of the earliest and bitterest enemies of the Christian faith, that Christians were wanting in their duty to the Emperor—they refer to their prayers for an answer. The practice has been specially approved and adopted by some modern churches, and incorporated in their forms : but we fear the duty is too much neglected by Christians generally, both in their public and private devotions.

Though, it were sufficient, that we discover no reason in the statute, to prove it temporary in its intention—that it accords with the spirit of Christian and divine benevolence—and was constantly obeyed in the ancient church, as a precept of lasting and universal obligation—yet it may serve to deepen our sense of the importance of the duty if we consider in detail—

II. ITS BENEFICIAL OPERATION.

There can be no stronger appeal to the conscience than "thus saith the Lord"—than any clear manifestation of his will. All religion consists in recognising his authority and glory—submitting to a duty because it is *His* will, and not simply because it is a decision of our reason. Reason is essential to religion, in determining the evidence that God has willed, and the exact meaning of his will. But to perform a duty, merely because it is reasonable and beneficial, without a reference to the authority of God, is performing no act of loyalty—it may be sacrificing to our own pride and selfishness. The authority of the divine statute should be most solemnly regarded. But as our God, to manifest more impressively, the perfection of his nature and government, has seen fit to point out the *reason* and benefit of his laws, it becomes us to contemplate these references. They enable us to determine more unquestionably the moral and perpetual nature of a statute; and every reason thus presented in God's law, becomes a new expression of his will—a new introduction of his authority, and a new obligation to obedience.

In contemplating, by the light of sacred scripture, the duty proposed in our text, we shall find it forcibly recommended to our regard, by the benefits it is calculated to afford to *the ruler*; to the *suppliant himself*; and to the *world* around him.

First; To the Ruler.

1. If those who are in authority, are not pious, prayer for them *may bring about their conversion and salvation*. This seems to be suggested in the connected passage, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," as an object of desire to a Christian. Whether he is influenced by the spirit of the second great commandment, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—or by a regard for the glory of the grace of God, nothing comes with a stronger recommendation to his heart, than that which has any tendency to "save a soul from death." Benevolence and divine law alike constrain him. At any expense, at any hazard, he perseveringly seeks it. Prayer for rulers may result in their salvation. He finds that the Father of mercies has said, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." He finds that when of old, a man sick of a palsy was brought *by others*, and laid at the feet of Jesus, he, seeing *their* faith, said to the sick of the palsy, "thy sins be forgiven thee." The Christian therefore will benevolently "pray for all in authority," (though they be sinners).

In the exercise of the most impartial judgment, according to that test which has been furnished by our blessed Lord, "by their fruits ye shall know them," the Christian will discover many "in authority," to be utterly destitute of even decent morals, to say nothing of religion. This will naturally be the case, while the majority of men are ungodly, or the moral are negligent in the exercise of their influence. The

men who are most wasteful of time, most boisterous in sounding themselves into notice, most prolific in abuse, most crooked and crafty in policy, the most obtrusive, the zealots of party, will ever be the unprincipled and profligate. These, first and last in the field, will not be apt to originate nominations of stern virtue and unbending integrity. Such would not be men after their heart, and materials to be warped to their purposes. An immoral "caucus" is not the source from which are to proceed Rulers who will reprove their vices, restrain them by law, or punish them by sentence and execution. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." The immoral and the selfish, will ever prefer men who are likely to make and administer laws which shall not interfere with their pleasures and selfishness—who will dispose of places and influence to gratify private ends. The slaves of party are not to be expected to choose men to administer for them, who will judge and act independently, but men who have neither God, nor creed, nor will, but their party. By such, party ends are best obtained. Considering the sources whence nominations too commonly proceed, it would be passing strange, if offices were not filled with the immoral and profane. Were it otherwise, human nature would not be consistent with itself. Virtue may indeed be talked of—Bibles, tracts, and churches may be complimented—Policy would be beside herself if she did nothing to flatter and gain the moral and the pious. But we have read of those, whose "mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration, *because of advantage,*" who yet "walk after their own ungodly lusts." Much then as our patriotism, charity, and partiality, may cloud our vision, we shall find many in authority who are destitute of piety or morals. Yet such are not to be abandoned by hope and prayer. Conscientiously pray for all in authority. Prayer has a prevalence that may save their souls. And we should pray the more fervently, because we not only find the immoral in office, but *office is apt to make and keep* men immoral and unholy. Office is too frequently the pension of a party, for some party service the possessor has rendered or will render. The previous service—the conditional gift—may involve entanglements deeply prejudicial to his spiritual interests. The ardent pursuit of party schemes, or of any worldly interest, absorbs the time, and thoughts, and feelings—leaving nothing for eternity and God. The continual company and converse of men of similar spirit, confirms the evil, hardens the conscience, and by example renders the soul secure in sin. The most powerful passions, such as love of honour, wealth, or power, are awakened and cherished to dangerous strength, by continual competition, and the ceaseless guard against popular fickleness. These passions are too urgent and boisterous, to admit of his hearing the "still small voice" of conscience and the Spirit. Continual flatteries of friends, associates, expectants, and dependants, nourish his vanity, and indispose the soul to the humility of the cross. The labours and

anxieties of office to disappoint envy with her hundred eyes, and slander with her hundred tongues, all contribute to pre-occupy the mind, and exclude "the things which belong to his peace." Entrenched behind the formalities of office, elevated above the voice of honest reproof and warning, he lives secure from admonition, and almost beyond the means of grace. Thus, the awful and affecting description of a former age of Christianity, is but too true of the present, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." But he that is "higher than the highest" can reach them; and your prayers can reach Him. He has directed you to "pray for all in authority." How importunate then should you be with God, that he would stretch forth his arm for their salvation. How much do they need your prayers. Neglect to pray for them, and you neglect the last means of grace—the last hope of their salvation.

2. If those "in authority" are *moral and pious*, your prayers may be beneficial in *keeping them* from deterioration and apostacy. "Bear ye one another's burdens," is the spirit and law of Christianity. Temptations and dangers attend every condition in life, but especially that of a ruler. Standing single and exposed, more conspicuous by elevation, he becomes naturally more alive to character, more anxious for public admiration. Self becomes a more constant point of attention, a stronger centre of attraction. The love of praise is in danger of increasing, and degenerating into sinful pride. He is tempted to enter into *alliances*, offensive and defensive, with those around him, to whom he owes, or may owe, his elevation. These are often the ungodly, and the measures concerted not likely to be pure. He must sacrifice his conscience and judgment to others. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." His piety begins to be an awkward singularity; he lives on the breath of *the people*; he more and more worships them; seeks to be popular rather than pious; and gradually forgets and forsakes God. The bustle of official business, fashionable entertainments, and party interests, leave him little composure or leisure for reflection and religion. The pious associates of private life are far away. The Holy Spirit is "grieved," and withdraws. Should the "form of godliness" remain, "the power" is gone: he may have a "name that he liveth, but is dead!" How many have lost religion in their elevation! Chrysostom remarked, that the preservation of the three Hebrews unpolluted, in the court of Babylon, was a greater miracle than preserving them unconsumed in the fiery furnace. Has, then, your Christian benevolence any anxiety in the hazards that attend the souls of those who are in high places?—would you sustain their purity and abate the force of temptation?—would you have them grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?"—"pray for all in authority"—remember them always in your prayers.

3. Prayer for all in authority is beneficial to them, since it tends to *make their administration more wise and comfortable*. It is a principle in our holy religion, that each one should "seek not his own," but another's good. An office is a place of care, not of ease. Every heart loves sympathy, and he who toils faithfully, deserves it. How consoling must it be to the faithful public servant, amid his labours and perplexities, to know that he has the sympathy and the prayers of the good. In those seasons when his judgment is embarrassed, and "wisdom from above" is requisite; when the time-serving confidant is treacherous, and advises only to betray; when administration is encumbered with unreasonable opposition; when integrity must proclaim war with the selfishness, the prejudice, and passions of men; when unavoidable calamity has brought upon the officer the reproach of incompetency; when every mouth of party and enmity is open—how soothing to reflect, that other mouths are kindly opened in prayer for blessings from above—that "he who seeth in secret," the God of all wisdom and consolation, is fervently supplicated in behalf of the embarrassed and anxious ruler. Who, that has the benevolence of a Christian, can withhold his prayers?

4. Praying for all in authority, is calculated to *impress them with a stronger sense of moral character and accountability to God*. Did the ruler know himself to be habitually contemplated by the pious, whether they offered up their prayers in the closet, in the family, in the conference, or in the church; did he find himself thus connected with the whole morality of the country, thought of as the hope or the fear of the virtuous, tested by the word and character of God, his sins confessed and their punishment deprecated in the presence of God, his virtues the subject of sacred thanksgiving, and his temptations, of anxiety and supplication—one would think this, if any thing, would have a tendency to awaken the stupid to thoughtfulness, the conscientious to greater vigilance, and the profligate to restraint and decency. One would hope that, in such circumstances, every ruler who was not already among those left of God to "believe a lie, that they might be damned," because they "had pleasure in unrighteousness"—that every ruler who was not among those whom the Bible describes as "past feeling," would seriously think of God and of himself; would ponder the path of his feet, and pursue a course that would bear the scrutiny of the sanctuary, as well as of the marketplace. None but those "who glory in their shame," would readily outrage all the moral feelings of the land, when they knew that the public estimate of character would not be made in the partialities of party, but the impartiality and solemnity of those who are standing before the great white throne of God and the Lamb. If then, "those in authority" should seem to be indifferent as to all conduct which party does not denounce, let us solemnly ask ourselves, whether, as Christian patriots, we have not been awfully and shamefully indifferent about the favour of the Most High towards them?

SERMON XLVII.

1 TIMOTHY, II. 1, 2.—*I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;—for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, contemplated the duty of “praying for all in authority,” as a matter of *Divine Statute*, and as beneficial in its influence upon *Rulers*; we are now to consider the benefits which a proper discharge of this duty would bring to *Christians themselves*; and to *society at large*.

1. And the first benefit to *Christians* we would mention is, that through their “prayers for all in authority,” *God may grant the privilege of “leading quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.”* This is a benefit proposed and warranted by the law of God we are considering. In some countries, the ecclesiastical system is so interwoven with the civil, that a king and parliament may, by constitution, interfere with the doctrines and discipline of the church. We remember the vexations and confusion which have sprung from such interference, and are apt to imagine ourselves constitutionally guarded from the fear of evil. But even *here*, neither the church nor Christians are safe. Christians are yet a minority. That salutary restraint which piety generally imposes on the wicked, may be taken away. The majority may be left to prejudices and passions destructive of our peace and welfare. Infidelity may come in like a flood. Our rulers may rejoice in the torrent, and like the leaders of revolutionary France, direct its rage against the altar. Christians, and all that Christians love, may be swept away in wild and bloody confusion.

But should not professed infidelity again revive its “reign of terror,” irreligion may do enough to fill the church with “mourning, lamentation, and woe.” Infatuation may possess our rulers. Charters of religious institutions may be denied or broken by our legislatures. Ecclesiastical censures and discipline may be dealt with by courts of justice, as libellous and criminal. Public business, trade, and all the machinery of government, may be united in violating holy time and holy institutions. Civil and political meetings may adjourn to the Sabbath. Post-offices, exchanges, and shops, may be thrown open, under plea of “liberty of conscience,” and commerce and amusement be allowed to triumph over the “Lord’s day.” The drum may be beaten at our church doors, troops marched and reviewed, salutes given and returned, because government patronizes no sect, and national honour and convenience are supreme—till, in the perfection of political philosophy, the Sabbath may be accounted *literally* “no day in law.” In a thousand modes besides these, may the sacred feelings of the church be disturbed, and

the influence of her ordinances destroyed. We are too much accustomed to look for danger and oppression to the church, only from arbitrary kings. We forget that the *people* may be arbitrary and oppressive, and the officers that represent them, but creatures to please their constituents and execute all their follies. This is our danger—not the thunder that breaks upon our heads from thrones above us—but the volcano that burns, and heaves, and ruins from below. It becomes us, then, to pray fervently, that our legislators may not sell their oath and conscience for a party or a vote, nor strike from our code check after check, till nothing is left for veneration and restraint; that our rulers may not prostitute the dignity and influence of office to the interests and corruption of an unthinking mob; but that they may be men of independent principle and conduct, who will conscientiously legislate, or faithfully execute what the law enjoins—men who will “well and truly” try the cause of the poor and the oppressed—men whose whole talent and influence shall be on the side of public knowledge and morals—in a word, that they may be, what God intended them, “ministers of God to thee for good,” “who bear not the sword in vain,” but are “a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those that do well.” For these things God must be supplicated; and the blessing will rest upon us. Our hope is not in vain. “By him kings reign, and princes decree justice.” “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; and he turneth it whithersoever he will.” It is his prerogative to give success or defeat to the plans of the wicked. “The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.” Let us, then, cast ourselves beneath the shield of the Almighty for protection, whether from the vexations and oppressions of rulers or of people. And that the blessings foretold by the prophets may be realized in our day, “when kings shall be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers” of the church, let us ever “pray for all in authority:” for God hath said, “I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.” Thus may the church quietly and prosperously pursue her work of subduing the world to the obedience of faith.

2. As a second benefit that may result to Christians from their prayers, *the judgments of God for the sins of rulers, may be averted or mitigated.* The sins of rulers have a notoriety and impudence, which seem publicly to challenge the moral government of God, and claim prompt attention and retribution. And if ever there is glory to God in the administration of his justice on earth, it is when it smites and humbles the proud transgressor, who is too elevated for odium, and too strong for human punishment. The sceptered sinner, may, for a season, exult in vanity and crime—the flatterer may cry out “the voice of a God,” but wretch!—thy God loathes thee—beneath thy robes of silver, the *worm* shall smite thee!* “If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and

* See Acts xii. 23.

violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter ; for He that is higher than the highest, regardeth—and there be higher than they.” It were well for mankind, if the corruption and chastisement of rulers were confined to themselves, and their sins sank with them to the grave ; but there are two modes in which their sins reach us—by *corruption* and by *punishment*.

They prepare us for divine judgments, *by their corrupting influence*. “ Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin,” is the record God hath given eighteen times of that wicked ruler. The sins of such, have a virulence of contagion found no where else. The very principle of submission and regard for authority, implanted in nature, as the foundation of government, gives sin an influence with the people. Their superiors have weighed and discarded the claims of God—the people acquiesce and imitate. Rather than think for themselves, they ask, “ have any of the rulers believed on him ?” If they have not, this is enough to make those beneath continue in their sins. The glare of honour—the robes of office—the pomp, the gayety, the brilliancy of their lives is such, that sin, in rulers, loses its deformity—sin in them is *mere foible, frolic, spirit—it is even enviable*. Rulers give the taste and fashion of the age. If by them, sin becomes a fashion, it is sure of diffusion :—a tendency to imitate superiors, in evil-doing, is one of the strongest principles in man. Who need wonder, then, that sin, when descending from those in authority, should flow wide and polluting through the land ?

There are many in society, who are decently moral, not from principle, but from the *constraint* of shame and law ; they long to riot in sin, and but for these restraints, would “ work all uncleanness, with greediness.” But if those who wield the terrors of the law “ have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement,” and patronize, instead of punishing transgression—if they lend the honours of their station, to annihilate all shame,—then no impediment is left—the highway of vice is laid open—the rulers have blown the trumpet—’tis the Jubilee of sinners—every profligate rushes from his retreat, and the general shout is heard, “ the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it !” —virtue is abashed—all is left to ruin, and to God. Then it is too late for prayer. The voice from the Holiest is, “ Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee—hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast ; for, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”

Who does not witness the confirmation of these tendencies in the history of Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, Louis XIV. of France, or Charles of England ? God alone can sustain the influence of moral restraint, or give the ruler “ over to a reprobate mind.” God alone can confine the evil to its fountain, or let it work its corrupting and fatal way through every portion of society. Who, then, that dreads the contagion of

wickedness in high places, and knows the only remedy, can be negligent in "praying for all in authority."

But corruption of society is not the only result of the sins of those in authority;—they bring *calamity* from God upon the land. The Bible is the only safe guide, to determine the plan of God's moral government. In the pages of his word, nothing is more manifest, than that God visits on a people the crimes of their rulers. It is taught there, not by an obscure and passing hint—not by mere inference—but by direct and awful assurance—by the whole tissue of scripture history—not the history of God's peculiar and covenant people alone, but of those who were "strangers to the covenant of promise." Lest you should suppose this plan of providence restricted to the Jews, look to Egypt—degraded, disordered, impoverished, sitting in darkness that might be felt, weeping over the dead bodies of her first born children, because her king and nobles had "hardened themselves against the Lord." Why that mighty host, horse and rider, dead upon the shore? They died in loyalty to king and country, but their *Leader had sinned against the Lord of Hosts*. Look to Assyria, Persia, Syria, Greece, or Rome—the lesson is the same; the transgressions of the ruler have been visited on the heads of the people, terribly fulfilling that declaration of the Most High—"When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

The Bible ever contemplates the ruler as the head, representative, and agent of the people, and identified with them. If such be the estimation and treatment of rulers in hereditary, what must we expect in *elective* governments? Here the people give, not a tacit and implied, but an open and actual consent to the men that are over them. Here the people single them out, set them up, clothe them with office, and bid them act by the authority, and in the "name of the people." Has our God "ceased to rule over the nations?" Should this age and land of light be a reason for greater clemency? Were the examples of his dealing with former nations not "written for our admonition?" Ah! my brethren, living as we do, under the sceptre of Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," we must calculate to be dealt with, as a people, on the principle, that "God is no respecter of persons." We have his decision in a case very similar to our own,—“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” I would say then to this nation, Reckon not yourselves secure by the perfection of your constitution and laws, or by your capacity of putting down one, and setting up another. Rely not on the extent, fertility, resources, and intelligence of your country. Trust not to the broad ocean that separates you from the calamities of Europe. Confide not in the piety of your fathers, or the learning and valour of their sons. The Ruler of nations has an arm to reach you. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down. saith

the Lord." He can visit your land with drought or mildew—canker-worm or hail—whirlwind or earthquake—pestilence or death. "Put not your trust in man, nor your confidence in princes." God can "bring to nought the counsels of the wise"—"give you a king in his anger, or take him away in his wrath." He can leave the body politic to become diseased in every member, and disastrous in every movement. Perjury may fill your courts - and fraud, your corporations. Your public agents may be prodigal, and your earnings go as a tax for their vices: your elections may become scenes of riot and violence, from which the peaceful and virtuous will retire. The most unprincipled may become the masters of your destiny; crimes may multiply; party may war with party, section with section, till the whole land is filled with change, confusion, sedition, and blood! God can, as he has done, embroil you in the politics and contentions of Europe, and from the ocean roll the tempest of his indignation, over your shores, and valleys, and mountains. If yourselves survive the storm, how many thousands of your friends and neighbours will have sunk for ever beneath it? How long the labours and heavy taxes to repair its wastes? Of this be sure, He that is "wonderful in counsel," is at no loss for instruments of judgment. While man is depraved, there ever will be combustibles enough in the midst of you to kindle a fire that shall consume your sins, and your confidence, and leave your country but "a name."

Let us then fix deeply in our minds, that principle of the divine government, that the sins of rulers have a connexion with national calamities. Let us "pray for all in authority," that they may be kept from transgression, and the land saved from participating in their corruption and punishment. Let us pray, while yet there is hope—before their crimes shall have reached a height, to render judgments sure; when prayers may avail nothing for the land. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls." Then the only answer yielded to your prayers, may be, "for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened."

3. Praying "for all in authority," will contribute to preserve you from *sinning against them*; while it will render your subordination *more easy and appropriate*. The law of the Lord, while it binds the ruler, and pronounces judgment against his crimes, demands from the subject, respectful language, sentiment, and action. Those for whom is "reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," are described as "murmurers, complainers," who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." The Christian not only "fears God," but "honours the king." This honour he pays "for conscience sake," considering government as "ordained of God." He will not "curse a ruler of the people." But his conscientious regard for those who are in authority, does not degenerate into unconditional submission. God is supreme. He there-

fore renders to Cæsar *only* the things that are Cæsar's—but to God, the things that are God's. In this country, there are *peculiar temptations* to disrespect and insubordination. Here, the ruler comes not forward, with all the venerableness of hereditary honours, seating himself in authority, with scarce an exercise of public will. Elections are frequent, and we hardly recognise the change they make. Yesterday, the ruler was himself a subject among us—to-day he is "minister of God." Our Press, too, is free and licentious, and the ruler comes to his seat covered with party scandal, scarce an object of respect. He was elevated, perhaps, against your will, and seems therefore, to have no title to your honour. No sooner has he attained his official station, than party rallies after defeat, and organizes more desperately, to displace him. He is envied, hated, watched, embarrassed, misinterpreted, vilified, and yet, all this time, he is, by the providence of God, ruler of the people. Christians, also, have their political connexions, interests, influence, choice. They are insensibly involved in the conversation, plans, and feelings of their acquaintances around them. They feel improperly—speak unadvisedly—and often lend themselves to a service, inconsistent with that scriptural and salutary respect due to "all in authority." But, let your feelings be sincerely and constantly drawn forth in prayer to God in behalf of all rulers, and you will find yourselves more sensible of your improprieties—more on your guard against the temptations around you; your submission will be more conscientious, cheerful, and exemplary; and you will, as subjects, "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour."

4. Praying for all in authority, will render you *more punctual, uniform, and conscientious in the exercise of your elective franchise*. In this country and age of light, there is less danger from the incapacity than the sins of rulers. In the political creed of Christians the declaration, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people," is second only to that fundamental article, "the Most High ruleth among the nations." When the Christian knows the injury to public morals from wickedness in high places—when he knows the purpose of God to visit the iniquities of rulers on the people—when he knows the ordinance of God respecting rulers, that they were constituted to be "ministers of God for good," a "terror to evil doers"—when he knows that God hath assured us, "the wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted,"—it is strange that he should ever, either by remissness or partiality, contribute to exalt men who have "no fear of God before their eyes"—who deny the authority of His law, and will not administer for God—men who by example and principles, strengthen the bands of wickedness, and by despising God's moral government, throw themselves and the community out of God's favour. Such a Christian, acts with less sagacity and conscience, than the heathen who appointed Joseph over the land, because "the Spirit of God was in him." He discards the injunction, which Moses, "who was faithful

in all God's house," obeyed—"Provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God." He forgets that the God of Israel hath said, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Inconsistent man! the bustle of party has obliterated from his mind, all but the principles and plans of his party, and he thoughtlessly "follows the multitude to do evil."

But when, after the choice of, perhaps, some rebel against God, the Christian who has neglected or abused his privilege of voting, retires to pray for him—then, in the calm of devotion, in the presence of God, who spake the Bible, who seeth in secret, and searcheth the heart, conscience, if any be left, will rally—he feels his inconsistency and presumption—he refused to be governed by the wisdom of God, and now he has come to ask the grace of God. The "holy hands" he lifts up in prayer, have, perhaps, lifted to power an open violator of God's law. He has come to pray, perhaps, for the atheist, the idolater of this world, the denier of the Lord that bought him, the profane swearer, of whom God hath already said, "I will not hold him guiltless." Or he has come to pray, perhaps, for the man who robs God of his holy day, to whom God hath said, "I will kindle a fire in the gates, and it shall devour the palaces." Or he may have come to pray for the duellist, knowing while he prays, that "the voice of a brother's blood crieth unto God from the ground." He may have come to pray for the man who habitually "neigheth at his neighbour's door," when Heaven has already declared, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." He may have come to ask God's blessing on the fraudulent man, the gambler, the political libeller, when God hath already uttered the eternal truth, "I hate every worker of iniquity, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." He cannot but feel embarrassed. To confess the sins of the ruler, is a poor comment on his vote. To disregard them, a poor comment on his own piety. The hope of acceptance with God is doubtful, and he finds, with shame, that he may not expect the spirit of prayer, at the expense of Christian consistency. To prevent such shame and inconsistency, then, *be habitual* in "prayer for all in authority."

But there is *one other aspect* in which we wish you to contemplate this duty.

Its beneficial operation on society at large.

1. And first, "Prayer for all in authority," has a tendency to *moderate the spirit and rancour of party*. Every good has its attendant evil. Offices here are numerous and open to all. The candidates are our acquaintances and friends, and in their interests, wishes, and schemes, we are perpetually involved. As elections are with the people, they will be constantly assailed. Reading is universal. Inflammatory pieces come with every mail—occupy every corner and every company. Men, too vain for quiet, too idle for labour, and hungry for office, every where abound. Hoping to live by the ferments of society, their lives

are spent in creating heat and commotion. Even after the question is decided, who is to be in authority, the passions do not always subside. How much unholy feeling ensues. Success has produced pride, insolence, ill-will, and contempt. Defeat has occasioned envy, chagrin, discontent, and hatred. Benevolence is lost—the precept, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” is forgotten.

It is plainly the duty of every patriot, to strive to mitigate such evils. Every Christian, especially, should quiet each unholy feeling, and exert himself to set up the great law of love—“Blessed are the peacemakers.” And what has a greater tendency to quell the tumult of passion, than the solemnity and interests of the throne of grace? How would society settle to a calm, and move peacefully and prosperously along, if, after it was determined who were the rulers, all the citizens would immediately and habitually associate in cordial prayer for them. Especially does it become those who lead the devotions of others, to give their souls to this duty “first of all.”

2. “Prayer for all in authority,” would produce on the public mind, an appropriate and *favourable impression respecting Christianity*. It was early objected to the followers of Christ, that they were destitute of loyalty and patriotism. This would be refuted, were Christians publicly and constantly to pour forth their prayers, to their covenant God, in behalf of the administration of their country. Did we calmly canvass the merit of the candidates for office, to ascertain their real virtue and capacity—did we as calmly and conscientiously vote—and then, receiving whomsoever God might give, retire and pray fervently for all in authority, without distinction of party, or name, or sect—we should exhibit our religion in its true political character—patriotic indeed, but “pure and peaceable,”—examining and electing in the spirit of piety and prayer, but meekly submitting to the vote of the majority, and benevolently imploring the benediction of God on the rulers they have chosen. Surely this is amiable, and this is duty.

3. By “praying for all in authority,” we should contribute to extend and sustain the important doctrine of Scripture, *that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is Lord over all, and ruleth among the nations*. Rulers and people would never have deemed political morality a thing of no concern, if they had not first imagined that the Most High “did not regard it,” or exercise any moral administration over the nations. But this kind of atheism is prevalent. Former politicians, in separating the state from the church, went to the extreme of separating the state from Heaven. The philosopher of Florence, said one who knew him well, “was the first to introduce into modern and Christian Europe, the fashion of reasoning and deciding on politics, exactly as if Christianity had no existence, or there had been no such thing as a Deity, or moral justice in the world.” The impious statesmanship of Machiavel became more and more fashionable. The sophistry of the Jesuits, contributed farther to destroy the difference

between right and wrong, and make expediency supreme. Voltaire wrote against Providence, and laboured to convince men that they owed no submission to any thing beyond themselves. The spirit and tendency of his school was directed to deliver man from all fear of the Deity. The whole of modern politics has been, in a measure, affected with this same poison. Policy is reduced to a science—but a science too much without God. Where is the political author, who properly insists on moral causes—the dependence of nations on the favour of the Almighty—and the Scripture conditions of enjoying his blessing, “from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift?”

But though men may philosophize, and forget God, yet he *will* reign, dispensing the changes and destinies of nations. He will reign in the person of the Mediator. Christ hath been not only “set King in Zion,” but “Head over all things to the church.” “He hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, *King of kings and Lord of lords.*” Ever since his exaltation as a Prince, he has been extending his kingdom among the nations. Compare the pledges he has made in his word, with the history of the Jews, and Romans, and every nation that has opposed his reign, and you will see terrific evidence of his supremacy. The royal title and prerogative of our blessed Lord, must be known and acknowledged throughout the world. All heaven has long since obeyed the high decree, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” It is duty, it is loyalty in Christians on earth, to proclaim his rights and honours. When they pray to him as King of kings, for his illumination, pardon, sanctification, protection, and guidance, in behalf of “all in authority,” and through their agency, for a blessing on the nation—the worshippers contemplate these earthly powers as subordinate, and Christ as supreme—regarding and controlling rulers, and through them dispensing national good and evil. Such is the doctrine of eternal truth. And the Christian, while he “prays for all in authority,” arrests the atheism and disloyalty of a revolted world, and vindicates the honour of Him, “who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” and who “must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

In a duty involving such principles and loyalty, is there a Christian who will withhold obedience? The spirit of the ransomed ones is not in him. Bending before the throne, with adoring angels, they cease not to cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” O, let this spirit pervade the whole church on earth—let “prayer for all in authority” go up continually from her ten thousand altars—let the supremacy of Him, “by whom kings reign and princes decree justice,” be habitually and publicly acknowledged by all her members—then the church would be, indeed, “the light of the world; the glory of the Lord be seen upon her; and the Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.” AMEN.

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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CHRISTIAN AND MINISTERIAL SELF-DENIAL AND FAITHFULNESS
URGED FROM THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS, viii. 9.—*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

THE example of Christ is often urged in Scripture, as a powerful motive to benevolence. It is with his eye fixed on the blessed Redeemer, that the apostle here urges the Corinthians to abound in liberality. He had, indeed, just drawn a powerful argument from the zeal of the poor and persecuted churches of Macedonia; and another, from the faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and diligence of the Corinthians themselves. But the last and most weighty argument is stated in the words of the text: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The context sufficiently determines the signification of the word "grace," as here used. It is "the *kindness* and love of God our Saviour" toward a fallen world.

I can only *glance* at the several topics suggested by the apostle in illustration of that grace which so often warmed his heart, and inspired his tongue: and I would do this, with a view simply to the enforcement of some duties obviously devolving on Christians and Christian ministers of this age.

I. We shall not duly estimate the grace of Christ, without keeping in view the glory he had with the Father before the world was; or the riches he possessed in eternity. "All things," says he, "that the Father hath, are mine." "By him were all things *created*, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers—all things were created by him, and for him." The wealth of the universe, then, was his, by right of creation; and to him it belongs to dispose of all things at his pleasure. Still,

II. "For our sakes he became poor;" and when a certain Scribe said to him, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he received for answer, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." "He made himself of no re-

putation." His birth-place was a manger ; his parental home, a lowly cottage ; his chosen associates, unlettered fishermen. The lame, the halt, and the blind followed him ; while the rich and the proud despised and rejected him. What insults did he not receive ! What cruel mockings and scourgings did he not endure ! What greater agonies could he have suffered ! Go into the palace of the high priest, the judgment-hall of Pilate, or the sepulchre of Joseph, and behold the depth of his humiliation. And,

III. For *whom* did he humble himself ? Well may " God commend his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." It was when man had " corrupted all his way before the Lord ;" nay, when he had *fallen* under the sword of divine justice ; when he lay, polluted in his own blood, in the open field—that Jesus passed by, and said unto him, "*Live.*"

Moreover, in the offers of this grace, no respect is had to persons. The invitation is, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come." To the king, and to the slave—to the man clothed in purple and fine linen, and to the beggar laid at his gate, the same overtures of pardon and eternal life are made. But,

IV. What *are* the blessings proposed with such freeness ? Verily, " he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" To them that believe in Jesus, the Spirit hath said, " All things are yours—whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." The full extent of these riches can be estimated only in the light of eternity : but we may see something of their bearing on man's dignity and happiness, even in the present world.

1. By Christ we are enriched with the knowledge of the true God. How profoundly ignorant man is of his Maker, till he beholds his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, I need not tell. The history of the pagan world furnishes a most melancholy comment on the boasted strength of human reason ; and on the value of that wisdom, which has not prevented men from changing the glory of the incorruptible God, into the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Indeed, many a sad lecture, on the vanity of human imaginations, comes to us from the infinite diversity of speculations on the Divine character, in *Christian* lands. Who that seeks at all, will not seek *in vain*, for a resemblance between the God of the Bible, and the god worshipped by thousands, who claim to be the followers of Jesus ! Still, with the revelation of Christ before us, we worship not an unknown God, unless we shut our eyes on Him, who is " the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

2. By Christ we are taught the *principles* on which pardon and peace are so freely tendered to sinful men. What question is so big with interest—and yet so far beyond the utmost reach of philosophy, falsely so called, as that—" How can man be just with God ?" It is indeed sometimes thrown out of the account, as unworthy the paternal character of the Deity. But this is not annihilating the question, as it stands on the sacred page ; nor relieving the

conscience burdened with guilt. There is a principle within, that impels the mind forward to a day of judgment—and at the same time directs the eye back on a series of offences against God ; and wakes up the inquiry—“ *How shall I stand when He appeareth ?*”

To Christ we are indebted for a knowledge of the fact, that “ God can be just, and yet justify the ungodly :” that “ he himself has become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ;” that now, there is “ no condemnation to them that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Through him, we obtain “ peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” In the light of his glory we look on the past with penitent composure, and on the future with triumphant hope. His promises encourage effort ; his threatenings warn us against indifference. From his example and precepts, we learn to cherish a meek loftiness of spirit—a holy superiority to the fascinations of the world ; and a quiet submission to the inscrutable arrangements of Providence. The light he has thrown upon the Divine administration, enables us to hold on our way, exulting in the prospect of triumphing over sin, and death, and hell, and reigning with Christ in heaven.

3. Christ hath enriched us with the privilege of entering into the presence of God, and pleading our cause before him with boldness and importunity. Once we were afar off—but now are we brought nigh. Once God’s throne shot forth devouring flame ; but now a mild glory hovers over it, and a voice is heard—“ Look unto me, and be ye saved.” Once the seraphim and cherubim only could approach : but now, the humblest born of earth, on whose heart is impressed the image of Jesus, may draw near with full confidence and hope. Nothing can bar you from this privilege : for Jesus hath purchased and made it over to you, and sealed it by the promise, “ Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” “ Let Israel then hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy ; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

4. The grace of Christ, and that alone, teaches men effectually “ to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.” Nothing else gives victory over those corruptions of the heart, that constrain even the holiest sometimes to exclaim, “ O, wretched man that I am !” Nothing else can dry up the fountains of that depravity, which carries misery and discord wherever it goes. But trace the operations of this grace, and you shall find it binding man to man—inspiring abhorrence of whatever tends to disunion, and delight in whatever promotes the knowledge, and love, and happiness of the world. You shall find it grasping the hand of the next-door neighbour, or perhaps of the infant prattler, and directing their eyes to Calvary. You shall find it prompting the *intellectual*, as well as the spiritual energies of men, to new and mightier efforts for the banishment of evil from the earth. You shall find it infusing wisdom into the preparation, and vigour into the execution of measures, for recovering nations from the region and shadow of death, and placing them among “ the nations of them that are saved.”

Such is the influence of that grace which we contemplate. And now, who can doubt that the dignity and happiness of man, even in the present world, rise high and advance toward perfection, just in proportion to his acquaintance with the true God, and with that grace which is revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord? And if this be not doubted, who, that has the heart of a man, will not *adore* the grace of Him, "who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich?"

But these views of the riches of divine Grace fall infinitely short of the reality. To know their full amount, we must lift the veil that hangs over eternity—we must fasten our eyes, now on the torments of the damned, and then on the glories of the upper world; we must listen to the eternal wailings from beneath, and to the unending songs of the ten thousand times ten thousand before the throne! Then only shall we begin to appreciate the worth of Christ's humiliation.

From the subject we learn, first, the Christian's high obligations to self-denial. Our great Exemplar withheld not himself from poverty, and shame, and violence, when our salvation was at stake. And who that denies not himself, and bears not the cross, can follow Christ and do him honour? Is it too much to demand of the Christian, that he be crucified to the world—that he mortify his members which are on the earth, and that he withhold himself from every indulgence that unfits him to act vigorously in behalf of a world lying in wickedness?

Feel you, my brethren, an aversion to any known duty?—to the duty of keeping your hearts with all diligence—or of maintaining a spiritual intercourse with your fellow-men—or, of adopting that course of active beneficence which is marked out by the word and providence of God?—To subdue this aversion is the province of self-denial. Or, feel you a propensity to throw away life in *inactivity*—or, in the pursuit of *vain glory*—or, in gratifying a thirst for intellectual acquisitions—or, in collecting those treasures that will perish with the using?—To subdue such inclinations is your immediate and imperious duty, however self-denying. Without such self-denial, you cannot be followers of Him, who, though "Lord of all," "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

We learn, in the second place, the obligations of Christians, to devote themselves to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom.

This kingdom is enlarged, only by withdrawing men from their allegiance to the great enemy of God, and inspiring them with new dispositions and principles of action. And this change of character is produced only through the instrumentality of a preached gospel, and other subordinate means of divine appointment. The maintenance of this instrumentality is committed to the church; and the authority of Heaven binds every Christian to do all that in him lies, to send the gospel to every creature. And if Christ became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich—and if the riches he procured be sufficient to meet the wants of a world—then, every sentiment

of *gratitude* requires us to publish his salvation, co-extensively with human wretchedness, even, if need be, at the expense of all our possessions, and our lives.

For every hope of heaven that sustains us under the accumulating afflictions of life, we are not more indebted to the sacrifice of Calvary itself, than to the grace that has made us *acquainted* with the sacrifice, and urged on us its acceptance. Christ had died in vain, but for the *revelation* of the *fact*, that "on Him were laid the iniquities of us all." His blood had not washed us from our sins, but for the mission of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit had not convinced us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, but through the word and ordinances of God, the appointed medium of his operations. True as it is, that "he who believeth not on the Son of God, shall not see life"—it is equally true, that men will not believe except they hear; nor will they hear without a preacher.

And to whom, if not those who have been made partakers of this grace of Christ, is intrusted the mighty work of bringing the world into subjection to his authority? To them surely it belongs to summon enslaved nations from the bondage of spiritual death, and to plant on every mountain and every island, the standard of the Prince of Life! To this labour of love, the authority of God commands—the love of Christ allures—and the worth of souls urges, by all the glories of heaven, and by all the terrors of that world, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

But while the whole church is called to engage in these labours of love, it is obvious that those whom God hath put into the ministry, should be found exerting a most direct and decided influence. To them it belongs to be as God's mouth to their fellow-men—to bring forth from their treasures things new and old, and affectionately, yet faithfully, to give to every man a portion in due season. To them it belongs to preserve a hallowed fire on the altar of the *inner* sanctuary—to maintain the spirit of devotion ever burning, amid all the storms that may assail, or the winds that may blow upon them, from an ungrateful world.

But the duties of the ministry at the present day, are confined within no narrow bounds. Allow the *providence* of God to be the interpreter of his will, and who can doubt that the millions of immortal beings brought under the eye, and within the reach of Christian influence, within a few years, but still sitting in darkness that might be felt, have all of them an immediate claim on our sympathies? And if so, who are to be their instructors?—who their guides?—who, but the ministers of God?

The notes of angels have waked a sleeper here and there on the high places of Zion; but mighty armies are yet to be enlisted and trained for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And in this great enterprise who have so important a part to act, as the ministers of the sanctuary? Are they not the leaders of the Lord's hosts? Are they not justly expected to bring into effort whatever of intellectual vigour, or of hallowed devotion, or of physical energy they possess?

It may not belong to many of them to leave the stations they now occupy,

that they may carry the weapons of their warfare into the thickest ranks of the enemy ;—but it *does* belong to them to raise up those who *will* engage heartily in these hazardous services, and to lead to active co-operation, every individual over whom God has given them influence. It *does* belong to them to do what in them lies for removing that darkness which still hangs over the path of duty—those prejudices which obstruct the march of truth—and all that ignoble spirit of selfishness and hypocrisy which still cries with deafening voice, “ For what purpose is this waste ?” .

And, when in addition to their own labours they have opportunity to avail themselves of the experience and influence of others, in arousing the public mind, shall they not gratefully receive them ? Does it ever become them to regard in the light of mendicants, the men, who, impelled by a high sense of duty, devote themselves to the thankless office of urging the claims of God and a perishing world ? Shall they join the cry of ignorance and covetousness in deprecating as a nuisance, the man who would help to elevate among them the standard of Christian duty ? Would to God there were none who sustain the holy office, that yet can coldly say to such a man—“ Go thy way for this time,”—“ at a more convenient season I will call for thee !” Oh, how often has the self-denying Agent been palsied in his efforts, and the church defrauded of much of the luxury of doing good, by such ill-timed interference ?

But, says the minister who thus sinks himself from the rank of God’s steward, to become the steward and guardian of his people’s money, “ My congregation is *poor*—scarcely able to support the gospel among themselves—and how *can* they contribute to the support of the gospel elsewhere ?” Might I reply to such a brother, I would say with modesty, Are your people increasing their wealth by withholding from the Lord ? Are they raising themselves to independence, by diverting the bounties of Heaven from the course assigned them by the injunction, “ Freely ye have received, freely give ?” Will they support the gospel less cheerfully among themselves, if taught by experience that “ there is a giving which tendeth to increase ?” Would you enrich your people ?—teach them the true value of riches. Would you make them habitually generous to yourself, and to the miserable around you ?—give them frequent opportunities for the exercise of generosity on a broader scale. Would you attach them most firmly to your person and your ministrations ?—point them to the millions who are poorer than themselves ; and point them to Him, who, though Lord of heaven and earth, for their sakes submitted to poverty, degradation, and death.

But, again it is said, “ My influence will be destroyed—I shall lose the power of doing good among my people, if I show myself so regardless of their interests, as to throw wide open the door to such as would solicit their charity.” Now, allowing this assumption to be true, what is the value of the influence thus lost ?—what is the worth of *that* power of doing good, which cannot be exerted, without destroying *itself* ? But I venture to say, the assumption is *not* true. *Show* me the man that ever lost his influence by a frank, enlightened, and bold discharge of duty ! Show me the man that was ever

driven from a post of usefulness, in a Christian community, by his zeal to do good, and to engage others to do good to those perishing for lack of vision! Should the case occur, wherein the minister of God urges on his people a liberality, which he himself does not exercise—should he clench his own hand against the claims of a dying world, while he requires them to open theirs, the effect would be—what it ought to be—a conviction of his insincerity—a loss of his influence—and, may I not add too, *the loss of his soul!* Let him withhold the force of his *example*, and he will preach *in vain*, on this, as on every other subject. But let him be *sincere* in the performance of his duty—let him show himself far enough superior to the love of filthy lucre to stake his all on the success of his efforts—and instead of forfeiting confidence, he will inspire *admiration*, and secure to himself a generous support from every man's conscience.

It is further said, in objection to frequent preaching on the subject of *beneficence*, that it diverts the attention of the congregation from subjects that are more intimately connected with vital piety; and that, like other practical preaching, it creates a disrelish for the great and distinguishing doctrines of religion. If it be so, let not the unhappy effect be charged on the *subject*, but on the manner of treating it. That this and every other practical subject may be so handled as to create indifference to the great principles of religion, there can be no question: and that *doctrinal* discussions may be conducted with equal infelicity, there can be no doubt. But, "Thou shalt preach the preaching that I *bid* thee," saith the Lord. And what is the preaching that God requires? If we examine his word, to learn what doctrines and duties are to be inculcated, and in what *proportion* they are to be taught, do we not find, that a generous regard to the wants and woes of mankind, whether in this world or the next, is here repeatedly urged as a duty second in importance only to that of supreme love to God?

It is confessed, that nothing more powerfully awakens the enmity of the natural heart against God, or calls forth louder complaints against the gospel, than a pungent and personal application of the duties which man owes to man: but I have yet to learn, that the summoning up of this hostility is prejudicial to the spiritual interests of a congregation. Indeed, experience shows, that the minister who desires above all things to see the work of God revive among his people, and to give them a clear understanding of the grand principles of revelation, can adopt no course of preaching, that will more certainly convince of selfishness and sin, or more probably conduct to holiness and heaven. This was the kind of preaching addressed by the Saviour himself to the rich and amiable young man whom he loved—"One thing thou lackest—Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor."

But I cannot dwell longer on objections to this branch of ministerial faithfulness. It is grievous to know that they ever enter the head, or pass the lips of any who are set for the defence and confirmation of that gospel which breathes "good will to men." I would, in conclusion, simply state some facts which ought to have great weight with God's ministers of this age and nation:—

It is a fact, that the churches of this country are able to raise hundreds of

thousands, where they now raise thousands, for the cause of benevolence, without impoverishing themselves, or even denying themselves a single comfort of life.

It is a fact that millions are wasted every year upon superfluities that were better dispensed with than allowed—and this too, by those who “ follow Him that had not where to lay his head !”

It is a fact, that if our churches were *convinced* of the duty they owe to the world, they would cheerfully deny themselves the luxuries, and even many of the comforts, in which they now indulge.

It is a fact, that they are not yet convinced of their duty—nor are they sufficiently enlightened : the subject has not been laid before them in all its length and breadth, and urged with that frequency, plainness, and pungency, which its importance demands.

It is a fact, that this indifference will never die a *natural* death—for it derives its support from the strongest passions of corrupt nature ; and it requires the most vigorous and persevering application of truth to destroy it.

It is a fact, that ministers are appointed of God to apply the truth—to attend continually on this very thing ; and to pour the light of Heaven on minds clouded by ignorance and covetousness. And,

It is a fact, that if ministers neglect this duty, they will not only endanger themselves in the final judgment—but they will mislead the souls committed to their care—they will be instrumental of hardening multitudes in worldliness and sin—of obscuring the hopes of others ; and of withholding from millions of their fellow-sinners in heathen lands, that gospel which is able to prepare them as well as us for the great day of God.

And now, who, that admits these facts, will decline or refuse the doing of what may be done, to draw forth the resources of the church, for the salvation of the world ? Brethren, the time is short. Soon we shall meet our respective flocks at the bar of God : and if the Judge shall say to any of them, “ I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat—I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink—I was a stranger, and ye took me not in—naked, and ye clothed me not—sick and in prison, and ye visited me not—inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, for whom I shed my blood, ye did it not to me—depart ye cursed ;” what will be our emotions, should we hear them reply, “ *Lord, we were never urged to this by those who came to us in thy name !*” And should almighty Grace triumph over our sins—should the angel of mercy interpose between us and the wrath we deserve—how far away must we stand from that throne on which Jesus sits, surrounded by the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs of other days ! How shall we lift up our heads among the Brainerds, and Martyns, and Halls of modern times, who counted not their *lives* dear to them, so that they might win Christ, and add jewels to his crown ?

Never was the field of the world so fairly laid open to Christian cultivation ; never were the means of rendering it productive of the fruits of righteousness so ample ; and never were the encouragements derived from success so abundant, as at this day. What single enterprise, undertaken in the name and spirit of the Lord, has failed ? What single blow has been struck at

the kingdom of darkness, that has not caused gnashing of teeth! Even the labours of infidelity itself, and all the stratagems employed to obstruct the march of truth, have contributed to its furtherance. The wrath of man praises God; and the remainder of wrath is restrained. Surely, the Most High hath girded his sword upon his thigh—and rides forth prosperously in the cause of truth and meekness—commanding all who have enlisted in his service, to go on with him from conquering to conquer, till the nations shall be subdued before him, and till a great voice shall be heard out of heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

SERMON XLIX.

Preached before the Synod of Virginia, at Staunton, Oct. 22, 1828.

BY GEORGE A. BAXTER, D.D.

President of Washington College, Virginia.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTRY AND CHURCH.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 15.—*That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

THE Church of God is undoubtedly the most important institution in the world. It connects itself, in a multiplicity of ways, with all the important interests of man. Were a community sunk in the lowest state of misery; distracted and degraded by every species of vice; the introduction of the pure gospel among them, would immediately renovate their condition; they would rise into a state of order and happiness. On the other hand, should the most moral and happy people apostatize from the faith of the gospel, and fall into gross error, that error would lead to vice, and their best institutions would decline. The truth of these observations is attested by the whole history of human affairs; and yet religion produces these results, not as its principal object, but in an indirect and collateral manner. The great object of religion is to train man for heaven; to prepare him for a state of happiness in worlds beyond the grave. But in preparing him for more perfect happiness above, it necessarily prepares him for happiness in the present state. It is hence a matter of the highest importance to mankind, that the affairs of religion should be wisely conducted. Indeed, among the many wonderful things connected with the gospel, I have often thought it not the least of its wonders, that we should have had this treasure in clay-vessels at all; that a system so evidently from heaven, and so connected with all the important destinies of the world, should have been intrusted, in any degree, to the management of imperfect man. But it has pleased Almighty God to honour his church and

people with a co-efficiency in these matters. His people are appointed to be fellow-workers with him, in bringing about the important purposes of the gospel: and this makes it a matter of unspeakable importance, that every one who sustains an office, or even a private station, in the church, should know how "to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The text, and the occasion on which we are assembled, will lead us,

I. To consider how we ought to behave, as it respects the preaching of the gospel.

II. To make some general observations respecting the management of the church.

First; *As it respects the preaching of the gospel.* While the church is considered as the pillar and ground of the truth, preaching must, beyond all question, be regarded as its most important duty. When I give this preference, it will not be understood that I mean to speak lightly of Bible societies, or Sunday schools, or any of those recent institutions, intended for spreading the knowledge of divine truth. These are among the glorious works of the church; but the preaching of the gospel by the living voice, is essential to the life and existence of them all, and of the church itself; it has, in all ages, been the principal instrument in the hand of God, by which the church has been sustained and advanced. Without the other institutions mentioned, the church has long existed; and, to some extent, it has prospered. But go into a region where there is no preaching, and there you will find the church languishing, or dead; you will find no Bible society, or Sabbath school; but one general scene of spiritual desolation.

There is such fulness of precept and direction in the word of God, as to preaching, that it would seem at first view no difficult matter to ascertain our duty in this respect. But when we consider the importance of the business, in itself, and the consequences growing out of it—when we consider that a minister must rightly divide the word of truth, giving to every one his portion in due season; and that to every hearer he will be a saviour of life, or of death—we may well exclaim with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

There are many ways in which a preacher may fail in the execution of his trust. From inattention, he may be unacquainted with the wants of his people, and of course unable to supply them. The love of ease may prevent the efforts needful to enrich himself and his people with knowledge. But there is another principle, which I think lies at the root of ministerial unfaithfulness; which slides very insensibly into the human heart; and which has produced unspeakable mischief in the church: I mean a disposition to accommodate the truths of the gospel to the prevailing sentiments of the world; or to form a compromise, between the doctrines of the cross and the feelings of the natural heart. Every pious minister, when attempting to preach the gospel, knows that he is about to deliver a message, most ungrateful to the ears of unregenerate men. Indeed there has never been any set of principles, or any system of truth on earth, which the world hates so much, as it hates the pure gospel of Christ. This at first view may appear strange; it is,

in itself, a matter of curious speculation ; but it is undoubtedly true. The law of God reveals the condemnation of the sinner ; the gospel reveals his redemption ; and yet mankind hate the gospel more than they hate the law. In proof of this, it is only necessary to attend to the manner in which our Saviour, and many of his most faithful servants, have been treated. Moses established the law among the Israelites ; our Saviour established the gospel among the same people ; and yet the Saviour was persecuted with much deeper enmity than Moses. Indeed, there has never been such display of enmity on earth, as was manifested against the Saviour and many of his most faithful disciples. And the only cause of this enmity was, their determination to propagate the gospel. But this enmity of the human heart is the same in every age. And when a Christian minister is fully sensible of this fact ; when he knows that the message he is about to deliver, has so much opposition from the world to encounter, he is strongly prompted to change the aspect of that message ; and to substitute a little of his own wisdom, for the wisdom of God. And this he may do, in a manner very insensible to himself. It is not necessary, that he should say any thing untrue. He may keep himself within the bounds of orthodoxy ; and yet, by insisting on those parts of the system, which are least unpopular, he may keep back those truths, which humble the pride of the human heart ; which show the exceeding sinfulness of sin ; and which make the sinner feel his entire dependence on the sovereign mercy of God. The same principle of accommodating the doctrines of the cross to the sentiments of the world, has often given rise to the most dangerous speculations and refinements in divinity, and thus led the church into most destructive errors. This has undoubtedly been the cause of that tendency, which the church has manifested, in every age, to turn aside from the simplicity of the gospel.

There have been, as it appears to me, but two periods in the history of the church, in which the pure gospel was extensively preached with becoming pungency and faithfulness. One of those periods immediately followed the resurrection of our Saviour. But it was not long before various mixtures of heathen philosophy were sought for, with a view to make the gospel more acceptable to the world. The other period of pure preaching, was that of the glorious Reformation : and this period too was soon overclouded, and apparently from the same cause. The churches of Germany and France were soon filled with refinements and speculations, by which the purity of divine truth was defaced.

But while a disposition to accommodate the gospel to the taste of the world has perverted the matter of the Christian ministry, it has had a still more injurious effect on the *spirit* of preaching. When the ministry and the church entertain favourable expectations from the world, this insensibly leads to a spirit of formality, and false security. But, on the other hand, when a minister feels that the enmity of the world is against him ; and that, unless God is with him to bless his work, both the message and the preacher will be rejected with contempt ; then he has the strongest motives to a life of faith and prayer. Under this impression, in his closet, and in the preparation of his sermons, he

will be frequent and earnest in his applications to the throne of grace. And in the sacred desk, all his dependence will be on the blessing of God. I believe that this impression, that help for the dead in sin can only come from God, is the very life and soul of ministerial faithfulness; and I would rather have one sermon prepared in the fulness of effectual fervent prayer, than hundreds of sermons prepared with much study and little prayer. And I further believe, that this impression, that help must be had, and that help can only come from God, whether pertaining to temporal or spiritual things, has been the main-spring of effectual prayer, in every age of the world. It was this impression which gave to Jacob that persevering faith, which would take no denial; "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." This impression has pervaded every church in our own day, immediately previous to a revival of religion. Professors have seen and felt, that the spirit of the world was gaining ground, that piety was sinking in themselves and others, and that, unless God should appear, all would be lost; and this has brought them to a throne of grace, with that humility and holy importunity, which God always approves. It too often happens, indeed, that when a revival progresses with power and majesty, the church soon falls back into self-dependence and security; and then a lamentable reaction takes place.

It is also worthy of particular notice, that all those men, who have been distinguished instruments of good in the church, have been remarkable for prayer. Just as much distinguished for a life of prayer, as for a life of usefulness. This fact has been mentioned of Luther, of Calvin, of Whitefield; and we know it was the case of Paul himself, and of all the apostles. These men were placed in circumstances which made them feel their dependence on God at every step. They saw the church full of weakness, while its enemies were powerful and active. But are we not placed in circumstances which require the same reliance on Almighty grace? Is not the church always weak in itself? Were our eyes opened to perceive all the workings of the human heart throughout the world, we should see the church of God, as it were, on the verge of a volcano; and nothing but that power which governs the winds and the sea, restrains the secret fires of that volcano from bursting forth, and overwhelming every thing sacred.

I have dwelt the longer on this point, as I would, if I could, persuade the ministry, and the church, to withdraw all hopes and confidence from the world, and to rely on God to bless their efforts. I believe this is the first step towards the triumph of the gospel. There is, I believe, a mode of preaching and sustaining the gospel, which will make it completely irresistible. Let the gospel be affectionately preached, in its simplicity, without any compromise; and let it be supported by the faith, and love, and prayers of the church, and nothing will be able to stand before it. Its triumphant march is sure as the promise of God.

I have already alluded to two periods, in which the gospel was extensively preached in its purity; and in both those cases, the church rose from a state of great apparent weakness, to a state of triumph and victory; and the victory continued, as long as the faithful preaching continued.

Had we been present in that upper chamber, to which the disciples resorted

after the crucifixion ; had we seen how exceedingly small was the number of the church, without one name of power or influence among them ; we should not surely have expected, that the preaching and influence of this little company would so soon have spread the doctrines of their crucified Master throughout the Roman empire. Who would have expected to see the temples of paganism tottering—its philosophers and orators confounded and silenced—and, in the course of a few generations, the invincible legions of Rome marching under the banners of the cross ?

Some may perhaps think that modern preaching cannot be expected to be thus successful, because primitive preaching was accompanied by miracles. But it appears to me that undue stress is laid on this circumstantial difference. Miracles were addressed to the understanding ; they were intended to attest the divine mission of Jesus—to prove that Christianity was from God ; and *not to convert sinners*. It is true, a miracle was performed when Paul was converted, but he was not converted *by the miracle*. The men who journeyed with Paul, saw that great light from heaven ; they were struck to the ground ; and heard, though indistinctly, the voice which spake to him. They were no doubt confounded, and, for the time, cured of the spirit of persecution ; but the history gives no intimation, that they were ever converted. And Paul himself was not converted by the miracle, but by the influence of divine grace on his heart.

It is then plain, that miracles were not intended to convert the heart, but to convince the understanding, and to give to all succeeding ages sufficient evidence of the truth of Christianity. This evidence we have now, with nearly as much clearness as they had it in primitive times, and supported by other sources of evidence, which they had not. The truth is, the public mind, throughout the most enlightened parts of the world, is much more fully convinced at this time, that the Christian religion is from God, than it was in the days of the apostles ; and we have sufficient means and evidence in our hands, to carry this conviction through all the benighted nations. And there appears no reason to doubt, that if the gospel were preached now, with as much purity and zeal, and supported on the part of the church by the same devotion as in primitive times, the success would be similar. The promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," is as full of encouragement to us, as it was to the primitive Christians. The sovereignty of God accomplishes the purposes of the gospel ; but it does this in co-operation with human agency ; and I do not see how we can understand the promises made to prayer, and to the use of means, in any way which will not throw the blame of the church's failures, and her want of triumphant success, entirely upon her own unfaithfulness.

II. I now proceed to make some general observations respecting the management of the church. And I would first observe, that although the doctrines of the cross ought to be preached with simplicity and plainness, yet it does not follow, that they ought to be preached by ignorant or rash men. Whatever may be true, in particular cases, it is by no means expedient, in the general, that illiterate men should preach the gospel. The blind should not

lead the blind: a novice should not be put into the ministry. Indeed, next to the curse of an unsanctified ministry, there is perhaps no source from which the church, in its different branches, has suffered more than from an ignorant ministry. Omitting many things that might be mentioned here, I will just remark, that the setting up of unscriptural tests and evidences, for judging of the Christian character and conversion, must be traced principally to this source. This is certainly a great evil, in our day; and is lamented by the wise and good of all denominations. In many cases, great stress is laid on certain things, as evidence of Christian conversion, or Christian character, which have little or no connexion whatever with religion; whilst the proper and scriptural evidences of a new heart and character, are almost entirely overlooked. Such mistakes not only lead to delusion and corruption in the particular societies which entertain them, but they fill those societies, with uncharitable sentiments towards others. Judging of other denominations, by unscriptural tests, they must judge wrong, and may be led to denounce, as unchristian, those better than themselves; they may even conscientiously think it their duty to counteract and pull down a society, which is doing more for the cause of truth, than they are doing. With respect to rash preaching, I will just make one remark. Paul was an excellent example of plain and faithful preaching. He declared the whole counsel of God; but he was far removed from rashness. Many cases appear in his history and writings, in which he employed great address, for the purpose of exhibiting the truth, so as to give no unnecessary offence.

In the second place, I would observe, that much prudence and wisdom is necessary in conducting the controversies which must arise between different denominations in the Church. Many persons are of opinion, that there should be no controversy between Christians; that it should all be reserved for infidels, and open enemies of religion. But if this opinion be right, the apostles were wrong. There was frequent controversy in the primitive church, Paul, at Antioch, zealously opposed Peter, rather than permit the cause of truth to suffer; and he often contended strenuously, with Judaizing teachers, whom still he did not denounce as entire enemies to the gospel. So, also, when Luther and his associates began the reformation, those holy men thought the time was come, when not only peace, but life itself, should be hazarded for the cause of truth. No doubt, the love of peace, and the love of truth, are the two great principles which ought to direct in all the intercourse of the church. But if these principles should come into collision, as they certainly may, and often do—the love of peace should yield to that of truth. The love of truth is a principle of paramount authority. When the love of truth is genuine, it is in itself a principle of candour and charity, and will preserve the peace of the church as far as it can with propriety be preserved. But to sacrifice important or fundamental doctrines for peace, is just as bad as to sacrifice them for ease or safety;—but if the truth could have been sacrificed for either ease or personal safety, the church would never have had its martyrs.

But if controversy be necessary, it should ever be conducted in a Christian spirit. And in order to this, in the first place, let every man who calls himself a Christian, lay aside that morbid sensibility, which rises into anger, when any part of his creed is questioned, even in a moderate manner; let every Christian be willing to have his principles questioned, and brought to the scriptural test, whilst there are other Christians who differ from him: and in the second place, let those engaged in controversy, remember that they are not contending for their own honour, but for the honour and cause of God: and let all pride of talents and love of victory, be kept down in religious disputation. Were these plain rules observed—and would Christians, with mutual regard to the rights of conscience, bring forward their differences, and discuss them in the fear of God; such a course might lay a true foundation for the peace of the church; and afford a prospect of removing from it whatever errors may at present exist; and of fulfilling that cheering prophecy, that “the watchmen of Zion shall see eye to eye.”

In the third place, I would observe, that it is the duty of all Christians to discountenance a proselytizing spirit. This is perhaps one of the greatest evils which can enter the church. By a proselytizing spirit, I mean that spirit which substitutes the love of party for the love of truth, and maintains the interests of that party on the principles of mere human policy. Such a spirit in the church is much like party spirit in the state. It is thought, indeed, that some degree of party spirit is useful in free governments; but when it passes its proper limits, all men are convinced of its ruinous tendency. It injures morals; it fills the land with slander and falsehood; and often throws suspicion on the best characters in the nation.

Now whatever effects the spirit of party may produce on the state, the spirit of proselytism will produce in the church—with perhaps this difference, that religion creates more intense feelings in the mind than even politics. How disastrous, then, must the consequences be, when the spirit of proselytism affects even a small part of the church! A few men, of even moderate talents, devoted to this employment, may do more injury, and produce more unseemliness in the house of God, than ten times their number of infidels, though of the most distinguished talents.

In the fourth place, I would observe, that the institutions which have lately arisen in the church, have received less attention than, from their importance, they deserve. These institutions are numerous, comprehending, among others, Bible Societies, Sunday Schools, Tract Societies, Concerts of Prayer, and Missionary and Education Societies, on an extended scale. These, in their united influence, form a most important machinery for the propagation of truth. The church had existed for near eighteen centuries, without these institutions; and yet, when they came into view, they appeared to have so much of the Christian spirit, and were so well calculated to embody, and carry forward, all the principles of the gospel, that we wondered the church should ever have been without them.

The manner in which these institutions arose, also deserves attention. They

evidently came not by the will of man, nor by human device, but by the interposition of God. The first movement in reference to a Bible Society, was a petty attempt to supply with the Scriptures, a few destitute families in a poor neighbourhood; and out of this arose the Bible Society, which now overshadows Christendom, and sends its blessings to the ends of the world. The prime movers in the scheme, intended no such thing. They were the first to wonder at what they had done; or rather to exclaim,—“What hath God wrought?” Similar remarks might be applied to most of the other institutions. Indeed, in their origin and progress, we have more than sufficient evidence to convince the Christian—we have almost enough to convince the infidel—that these institutions are from God. I say we have almost evidence enough to convince the infidel; and I believe I may add with safety, that infidelity has been greatly confounded, by these new appearances in the church.

But it is matter both of surprise and regret, that what has been sufficient to confound infidelity, has not been sufficient to awaken the whole church of God. Some parts of the church, indeed, seem to be alive to the subject; but with us, (to our shame and humiliation be it spoken,) professors of religion are generally asleep. Perhaps, then, the first thing incumbent on us, is to spread the knowledge of these institutions and their operations, as extensively as possible. For when they become fully known, they must, and will, in some measure, form a test of Christian character. They have so much of the Christian spirit, that all who love the gospel will love them, and every true Christian will do something for their advancement. The rich will then give as God has prospered; and those who have little, will still give something. I believe, even now, if it were communicated from heaven to any individual, that the great Head of the church would receive nothing more from him to aid the cause of religion—that God would carry on his own work—raise up and prosper his servants—and fill his own treasury,—but that nothing more should ever be received from him, in aid of the cause,—I believe that such communication would be regarded almost as a death-warrant: that individual would feel as if “God had taken away his part out of the *book of life*, and out of the *holy city*.” Who, then, will wilfully exclude himself from any part or lot in this matter?

These sacred institutions assuredly present a loud call to the ministry, and the church, to raise the standard of exertion in every form. And let it be remembered, too, that, in times of darkness, God might wink at things, which he will not pass with impunity in times of greater light. In this glorious day of the manifestation of divine power, the church is called to act under peculiar responsibilities. Let us, then, my Brethren, here dedicate ourselves anew to God: let us solemnly resolve, that through divine grace, we will stand firm and wakeful at our posts; and let us devoutly look to that God, from whom salvation cometh, to inspire the churches under our care, and all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a spirit worthy of their Master, and worthy of this eventful age. AMEN.

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Go...Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMONS L. & LI.

THE NATURE AND MEANS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

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2 PETER, iii. 18.—*Grow in grace.*

THE word "grace" is of frequent occurrence, and high and interesting import, in the sacred Scriptures. In the great concern of man's salvation, no other word has a richer meaning. But while the general-idea of the term is every where retained, there are several shades of difference in the signification, as it is used in different passages of the sacred text. Its primary and more usual sense is, the favour of God to sinners; or in other words, the love and mercy of God. In this acceptation, grace is the fountain of life, the source of salvation, to which all other blessings may be traced, as to their first cause. Thus Paul, (who abounds in the use of this word,) in his epistle to the Ephesians, says, "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." And again, "By grace are ye saved,"—"that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."

But as the gospel is the channel through which this fountain pours forth its exuberant streams, it is called, not only "the gospel of the grace of God," but "grace" itself. As where it is said, "We then as workers together with him, beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." And also in the following text, "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men;" in both which passages, the least attention to the context will show, that by the grace of God is meant the gospel.

And as the gospel is rendered effectual to the salvation of sinners, only by the aid of the Holy Spirit, therefore his influences on the heart have also received the name of grace: as, "My grace is sufficient for thee:" "By the grace of God I am what I am:" "And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

But in our text, the word "grace," has a meaning somewhat different from what it has in any of the passages which have been cited. Christians are here exhorted to "grow in grace;" which would not be a practicable thing, in any of the senses of the word already given. By "grace," here, we must understand, the principle of new life, implanted in regeneration; a sense of the word, much in use among us, but rather unusual in the Scriptures.

When the ~~parable~~ exhorts Christians to "grow in grace," it is the same, as if he had said, increase in holiness, or advance in piety. And it would not be easy to select a subject of greater importance, to all professors of religion. If comfort and usefulness here, and the degree of our felicity and glory in heaven, will be proportioned to our growth in grace, then the subject possesses an intrinsic importance, which should command the attention, and deeply interest the feelings, of all who hear me. What I propose then is,

- I. To explain the nature of growth in grace.
- II. To inquire, by what means growth in grace may be promoted.

It is evidently implied in the exhortation, that the persons addressed, were the subjects of grace ; for that which has no existence cannot increase. But grace is a plant which does not grow in nature's garden. It is of heavenly origin. By nature we are all "children of wrath," conceived in sin, and totally destitute of holiness. None, therefore, but the truly regenerated soul is capable of growth in grace. We have, it is true, a rational nature and a moral constitution, and are accountable, free agents ; but in relation to spiritual exercises, we are dead—"dead in trespasses and sins." If there existed naturally, in man, any principle of spiritual life, it might, by assiduity and favourable circumstances, be enkindled ; and by being cherished, might, by degrees, advance to maturity. A seed which possesses vitality, although it has lain dormant for a thousand years, yet when placed in a congenial soil, and subjected to the influences of heat, air, and moisture, will readily sprout, and grow, until it arrives at maturity. But if the vital principle be lost, it will never give any indications of life ; and all the skill and power of man can never cause it to vegetate. And yet, this seed, when subjected to the minutest scrutiny by the aid of the best optical glasses, may appear to have no defect in its internal structure. It may possess the perfect organization of seeds of the same species, but its vitality has fled, and no power on earth can restore it.

Analogous to this is the condition of the human soul. Possessed still of all the faculties with which it was created, it has lost the image of God, which consisted "in righteousness and true holiness." The principle of spiritual life with which it was animated, has become extinct. And as the communication of life of every kind is the prerogative of God, so the regeneration of the soul is ascribed to him in Scripture ; and as this work requires the exertion of the same power, which at first caused light to shine out of darkness, it is denominated "a new creation ;" and, as there is in it, some analogy to the raising a dead body from the grave, it is called "a resurrection ;" but as this divine power is exerted in a free and sovereign manner, without any consideration of merit in the creature, it is called "grace."

Although grace does not exist in any man by nature, but as a communicated principle, yet it may be received at any period of our existence in this world, from infancy to old age ; and we read of some who were sanctified from the womb ; but as far as can be judged from experience, the number of such is very small. Piety is seldom observed to exist with the first dawning

of reason and moral feeling. Most persons, therefore, who become the subjects of grace, can remember the time, when they were alienated from the life of God; and have some knowledge of the change which took place in their views and affections.

Another thing implied in the exhortation of our text is, that grace in its commencement is imperfect, and that its progress to maturity is gradual; for if it were perfect, there could be no room for growth. Although, in different individuals, the vigour of spiritual life is different in degree, yet in most cases, grace is, in its infancy, feeble. The indications of its existence may be very clear, and its actings lively; but still, this is nothing more than the vivacity and strength of a healthy babe in Christ. For in young converts the knowledge of spiritual things, generally, is indistinct and confined, and their faith wavering. When their feelings are joyful, they can exercise confidence in God; but when a dark cloud overshadows them, they are cast down with discouragement, and sometimes driven to distrust the mercy and faithfulness of the Redeemer, to whom they have committed their souls. Their pious affections also are unsteady, and though apparently strong, are nevertheless mingled with gross animal feelings, and alloyed with selfishness. As grace is progressive in its nature, it may be inferred, that where there is no growth, there is no life. The degree and rapidity of advancement in all, however, is not the same: nor does it bear an exact proportion, in every case, to the vigour of the principle of spiritual life, at the time of the new birth: As it is an observable fact, that some infants at first are so feeble, that they can barely be said to be alive, and yet after a while, by assiduous nursing, become much more robust, than others that commenced life with greater strength; so, in the divine life some Christians, who in the beginning gave but obscure indications of grace, afterwards become vigorous in piety, and far outstrip many whose commencement promised more eminent advancement. It should be remarked here also, that the life of piety in the soul is subject to such diseases and decays as often greatly retard its progress, and cause it, for a season, to decline. These declensions are so common, that some have supposed, that all Christians do, in some part of their course, make a retrograde motion; and instead of advancing, lose something of the ground already gained. But there seems to be no just foundation for this opinion. In some saints, both of those whose lives are recorded in Scripture, and of those who fall under our own observation, there is no evidence of backsliding; but still it is a lamentable fact, that there are very few, who have lived long in the profession of piety, who have not reason to confess with shame, that they have at some time "left their first love," and become remiss in their vigilance, and, of course, unfruitful in their lives. And not unfrequently, while in this feeble state, they are overcome by some temptation, so as not only to contract a painful sense of guilt, but also to bring reproach on the holy profession they have made. This frequency of spiritual decays, is one of the chief causes that so few Christians rise to eminence in piety. A fall may, indeed, make a man more cautious ever afterwards; but he purchases experience at a dear rate, who pays for it with a broken bone, or a joint out of place. And here it may be observed, that

nothing is more insidious and dangerous to the backsliding Christian, than a certain leaven of antinomianism, which too often diffuses its deadening influence over the soul. The soldier of Christ sleeps in the midst of enemies, and dreams of victory without conflict ;—he falls under the influence of some temptation, and excuses himself by referring to the example of other saints. But every professor ought to know, that every degree of backsliding is, so far as it goes, an evidence against the reality of his piety. Many, alas ! who once appeared well, go back by a perpetual declension, and thus prove that the “root of the matter” was never in them. Every step in this backward course, should be viewed as an alarming circumstance ; and it may be safely affirmed, that all confidence of security indulged by any, while in a backsliding state, is delusive. A man may, indeed, be in a safe state, as to his ultimate salvation, when under a spiritual decay ; but he cannot in such a state, possess any satisfactory evidence of safety.

The strong tendency of the heart, even in the best, to depart from God, furnishes a powerful reason for the exhortation, to “grow in grace ;” for, in religion, it has often been observed, that there is no such thing as standing still. If the Christian makes no advancement, he is pretty certainly going backward. The only course of safety, therefore, as well as comfort, is, to make vigorous efforts to “grow in grace.”

The nature of growth in grace, after what has been said, will require little explanation. It is a gradual increase in the vigour and purity of all those affections in which holiness consists ; and is necessarily accompanied with a decrease of the power of sin. A real growth in grace includes also an advancement in spiritual knowledge, especially in the knowledge of our own depravity and helplessness, and of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Mediator. The apostle, therefore, joins these two things together, in his exhortation, and says, “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

An increase of faith is an essential part of growth in grace. The belief of the reality and excellence of divine things becomes more firm and constant ; a more implicit reliance is placed on the promises of God ; and the soul, in the exercise of humble confidence, is enabled to commit all its concerns, for time and eternity, to the care of a covenant-keeping God.

But there is no one thing more essentially involved in this progress of religion, than the growing fervour and constancy of love to God. This holy principle continues to strike its roots deeper in the heart, and becomes more and more purified from the alloy with which it was at first mingled. Growth in divine love manifests itself in a reverential esteem for the moral attributes of God, in a greater delight in meditating on his holiness and goodness ; and in a livelier exercise of gratitude for His love and mercy towards ourselves and others. It is accompanied also with a more ardent desire to please God, to enjoy communion with him, and to advance his glory in the world.

Progress in real piety includes also an increase of humility. The more true knowledge the believer acquires, the more penetrating is his view of the sin that secretly works within him ; and the more holy he becomes, the more abominable does all sin appear. No evidence of growth in grace is less suspicious than this. Hypocrites may, indeed, affect humility, and abound in

the language of self-abasement ; but it is difficult to wear this disguise without betraying one's true state of heart. The growth of grace is as much downward at the root, as upward in the towering and spreading branches ; and he who supposes that he is making a near approximation to perfection, and yet is not abased before God, under a sense of his own vileness, does but deceive himself.

Resignation to the will of God, is another criterion by which growth in grace is ascertained ; or rather, it is an important part of that grace in the heart, of which growth is predicated. The more uniformly and cordially we can say, under all circumstances, even the most afflictive, "Thy will be done," the more strength has the principle of grace acquired. And as genuine progress in piety, is the growth of the whole spiritual man, so our love to the children of God, and our sincere good will to all men, will bear a just proportion to our piety to God.

Moreover, if piety flourish in the inner man of the heart, it will manifest itself by the abundance of its fruits in the life. Holy, active, universal obedience to the commandments of God, will flow from a heart warm with love to God and love to man ; and will evince to others, as well as to ourselves, that we are thriving Christians. Our light will so shine, that others seeing our good works will be induced to glorify our Father who is in heaven. The conversation of a growing Christian will be edifying to all around : his speech will be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Out of the good treasure of his heart, he will be continually bringing forth something good. His example will be a model for the imitation of others ; and in proportion as grace prevails in his heart, there will be exhibited a beautiful consistency in his life. His attention to all the duties of the worship of God, in public and private, will be constant and conscientious ; and with alacrity and energy, he will exert himself to advance the cause and kingdom of Christ, in the world ; counting no service too hard, and no sacrifice too costly, which will aid in promoting the glory of God, by the propagation of the gospel throughout the world.

Several stages, in the progress of the spiritual life, may be particularly noticed. The first is the state of the Christian immediately after his conversion ; when both novelty and contrast are combined with the excellence of the objects presented to his view, in the new world into which grace has translated him, to make a more sensible impression on his mind than will be produced by the same truths afterwards. A new creation has, indeed, risen up before him ; "old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new." His wonder is excited, his joy overflows, his hopes are buoyant, and his heart melts with tender compassion for those who are yet out of Christ. His frames are often delightful, but they are transient : and from the mount of vision, he quickly descends into the dark valley of doubt and sorrow. He lives rather by sensible feelings than by faith. His eyes often overflow both with joy and grief. In the exercises of religion, he is full of ardour, nor does he suspect a reverse, nor foresee the dangers which beset his path. In fervency of spirit, and alacrity in the service of God, he seems greatly to outstrip older disciples, who have been long engaged in the Christian race ; and is sometimes disposed

to chide them, because they do not manifest that quick susceptibility of feeling, and that glowing zeal, with which he feels his own bosom penetrated and warmed.

This period of the Christian's life bears a strong resemblance to infancy and childhood, when a succession of lively emotions fills up our days ; when vivacity and activity are predominant traits in our character ; when our transitions from one state of feeling to the opposite, are sudden and frequent ; and when our happiness depends very much upon our ignorance of the evils which surround us. The cup of joy would be embittered to the young convert, if he had a clear view of the depth of iniquity which still remains in his heart, and of the dangers and conflicts which await him in his future pilgrimage.

The second stage is that of temptation and severe conflict. Before, he resembled the young soldier just enlisted, and enjoying his bounty-money ; but now his case is like that of the combatant on the field of battle. The same power which opened a passage for the children of Israel through the Red sea, could have transported them to Canaan in a day or an hour, but it was the plan of their invisible Leader to conduct them through the wilderness, and subject them to numerous difficulties and temptations, that he might put their faith and obedience to a severe test. So, also, our Heavenly Father could translate his redeemed children at once to heaven, or could render their passage through the world uniformly pleasant ; but, instead of pursuing either of these courses, he leaves them to learn, by bitter experience, the treachery and wickedness of their own hearts, and the malicious devices of the invisible enemy, who is ever ready to assault and vex them.

These trials, from causes which exist without and within, often come upon the people of God at the time when they have "left their first love," and have become remiss in watchfulness and prayer. A conscience goaded with inward stings, is a fit subject for Satan to operate upon with his fiery darts : and his usual method is, first to seduce the unwary souls by baits of worldly glory or sensual pleasure, and then to attack the debilitated believer with desperate suggestions, calculated to make the impression, that the favour of God is "clean gone," and that "he will be merciful no more ;" or, that his sins are unpardonable ; or that the day of grace is gone by for ever. Now, also, the providence of God seems to combine with other causes to afflict Zion's pilgrim. Dark clouds of adversity gather over him. Earthly comforts decay. The sun of prosperity no longer shines. The fondest hopes are disappointed, and the brightest prospects of earthly bliss obscured. Malignant enemies arise from among those before considered friends ; health is broken ; slander and reproach assail ; dear friends and relatives are buried in the grave ; children are disobedient and profligate, or die prematurely ; and, to complete the list of troubles, the church, broken with schism, and overrun with heresy and hypocrisy, sits in sackcloth and mourns. Now the Christian pilgrim spends his days in trouble, and his nights in groans and tears. If, under these accumulated evils, the light of the Divine countenance was lifted upon him, he could still rejoice in the midst of tribulations ; but, to add poignancy to all his other griefs, his Heavenly Father seems to frown upon him. To his most earnest prayers he receives no answer ; or, if an answer comes, it is only this, "My grace is sufficient for

thee." But no evils so grievously afflict the renewed soul, as the corruptions of the heart. Evils unsuspected to exist now show themselves, and manifest a strength and obstinacy, which baffle all the resolutions and efforts directed against them. Pride, envy, unbelief, insensibility, impurity, sloth, and evil thoughts without number, pollute and harrass the afflicted spirit.

These conflicts are not experienced in an equal degree by all Christians, but every one has his share, and every one knows the plague of his own heart, so much better than that of others, that his secret thought is, that his case is, of all others, the most deplorable and desperate. In his extremity he is often ready to exclaim, "If I am a child of God, why am I thus? Surely no others are so beset with sinful entanglements, and distracted with contending passions."

There is, probably, in every case of Christian experience, something peculiar, something which distinguishes it from every other case; but there is, notwithstanding, so great a general resemblance in the conflicts of the pious, that he who knows his own heart, sees, as in a glass, the condition of all his brethren. For "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

This may be termed the winter season of grace. The tree is now stripped of its foliage and its bloom, and very little fruit appears on the branches. But while it is shaken by the fierce blasts, so as to be almost overturned, it may be gaining strength by the concussions, and may be striking its roots more firmly in the earth. So the tempted and afflicted Christian, while he experiences a great loss of comfort and sensibility, may be, and often is, actually growing in grace. Much knowledge of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, is obtained; a deadly blow is struck at the root of self-confidence and self-righteousness; a broken and contrite spirit is produced; Christ and his grace are more highly appreciated; and the desire of total and universal purification from sin becomes more constant and intense.

The third and last stage in the progress of the divine life, is a state of settled peace, when the violence of the conflict is over, and the risings of sinful passions are greatly subdued by the power of divine grace. This is the sweet calm which succeeds the storm. Now there is, instead of doubts and darkness, a comfortable assurance of the favour of God. This period is characterized by a steady trust in the promises and providence of God, and a meek submission to his holy will. The mature Christian is not less sensible of the depth of remaining depravity than before; for the more holy he becomes, the more quick-sighted he is to discern the minutest spots which defile the "inner man:" but he has now learned to "live by faith on the Son of God," and has formed the habit of continual application to the "blood of sprinkling," and to "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." Many of his former besetting sins are indeed subdued; and he has learned the necessity of vigilance in guarding against the occasions of sin, as well as against the first buddings of evil desire: but his peace does not result from any views which he takes of an increase of sanctification in himself, but from keeping his eye steadily fixed on "Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith."

This advanced state of piety is also characterized by an increasing dead-

ness to the world and all selfish interests, and by an enlarged and sincere good will to all men; but especially by a tender solicitude for the prosperity of Zion, and an anxious desire for the salvation of men.

This has sometimes been denominated the state of contemplation; because in it the meditations of the Christian are much occupied with heavenly things. The glory of the invisible world makes a deeper and more constant impression on his mind than formerly, and his thoughts are often elevated to delightful contemplations of the heavenly state. The aged saint, who has become mature in grace, and whose faith has grown strong, spends much of his time, by day and by night, in meditating on that "rest which remains for the people of God." In this exercise his soul is frequently absorbed, and he is fired with an intense desire "to be absent from the body and present with the Lord;" yet his submission to the divine will, and his desire to promote the glory of Christ on earth, will not permit him to be impatient. He is willing to wait, even in the midst of suffering, until his change come. How beautiful, how lovely, how venerable, is old age, thus laden with the fruits of piety; and like a shock of corn fully ripe, waiting to be gathered into the garner of the Lord! When the veteran soldier of the cross is unable to perform any more active service for his Master, he still watches about the doors of the sanctuary;—he still lifts up his withered and trembling hands in prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. He is ever waiting for the consolation of Israel; and when the Saviour appears by some remarkable manifestation of favour to his church, he can exclaim with Simeon of old, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And often, when the vigour of the mental faculties begins to fail, the flame of piety continues to burn brightly; and, on a dying bed, such Christians exhibit a spectacle, than which there is nothing more lovely and interesting on this side heaven. Calm submission, humble confidence, holy aspirations, the kind emotions of benevolence, and the sublime joy of the Divine favour, often render the chamber of death like the vestibule of the temple above. Who, then, would not join in the prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

A few brief reflections shall bring this discourse to a close.

1. It appears from what has been said, that in some stages of the Christian's progress, the growth of grace, when it actually takes place, is not easily ascertained. It is, therefore, reasonable to believe, that some pious persons fall into mistakes on this subject, and judge that they are losing ground, when in fact they are slowly advancing. Because their first fervours have abated, and because they are much more conscious of indwelling sin than when they first believed, they draw the conclusion that they have been, all the time, growing worse: whereas, true religion has been taking deeper root in their hearts, and their knowledge of themselves and of divine truth, is greatly enlarged, and has become much more distinct.

2. It is also evident, from what has been said, that there may be a great display of zeal, much attention to the externals of religion, much liberality in contributing to the support and spread of the gospel, and much appearance of sanctity, when there has been no real advancement in piety. The reason

is, because all these external acts, and all this show of piety, may be produced by other motives than the lively exercise of grace in the heart. Such persons ought to be esteemed pious by men, where no contrary evidences appear : but often, "that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God ;" for man must judge according to the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart.

3. Some Christians grow to much higher stature than others. In most, however, in our days, the advancement in piety seems to be small, compared with what we have reason to believe it was in the times of the apostles, and in some other periods of the church. No doubt there are some now who become eminent in piety ; but the general standard of piety is apparently low. Few professors, in our churches, have attained to that state of settled peace, and calm submission to the will of God, which was described as the last stage in the Christian's progress towards perfection.

4. It is impossible to say how much the comfort and usefulness of most of the pious is diminished, by their failing to make greater progress in the divine life. The difference between a lively, growing Christian, and one who makes little or no advancement, is as great as between a healthy and a diseased body. The motives to growth in grace are, therefore, of the strongest possible kind.

Finally, upon a review of the past, every one of us must be sensible, that if we had improved our privileges, and exercised greater diligence and vigilance, our advancement would have been far greater than it now is. What Christian can look back without severely reproaching himself, on account of his slothfulness and carelessness ? All may not have backslidden, but in all there has been often a criminal remissness. Many have to lament most sad declensions, and some, disgraceful falls, by which the conscience has been wounded and religion dishonoured.

In view of this subject, therefore, all Christians are called upon to humble themselves before God, in deep penitence, on account of their unfruitfulness ; and to resolve, that in time to come, they will more faithfully and vigorously strive to grow in grace.

SERMON LI.

MEANS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

2 PETER, iii. 18.—*Grow in grace.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the nature of growth in grace, I propose now to inquire,

II. By what means this growth may be promoted.

The exhortation of the text evidently supposes that something must be done by us. The mere idle wishing for the object will never effect it. Means must be used ; diligence must be exercised. I would, therefore, endeavour to explain what is requisite, in order that we may fulfil the duty here enjoined, and may obtain the blessings connected with its due performance.

Perhaps there is no method by which we shall be able to obtain more dis-

tinct and satisfactory ideas on this subject, than by considering the analogy which exists between growth in grace and the natural growth of the human body, from infancy to mature age. Suppose, then, the inquiry to be made, By what means may an infant be most successfully preserved in health, and caused to grow to the full stature and strength of a man? Every one upon reflection would answer,

1. That the first and principal thing requisite, must be a sufficient supply of wholesome and suitable nutriment. Now, the same thing is true in regard to the child of grace. He must receive, from time to time, spiritual food adapted to his state of advancement. As in the natural life, milk is given to babes, and strong meat to full-grown men, so Paul teaches us, that in the spiritual life the analogy holds good; and Peter employs the same allusion, and moreover informs us, what that food is which is figuratively called milk. "As new born babes," says he, "desire the sincere milk of *the word*, that ye may grow thereby."

This subject is also treated a large, by the Supreme Teacher. Christ says, "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is that bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh.—Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; — for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

We learn, then, that the *word of God* is the proper food of the spiritual man, and that the excellency of the word and its adaptation to nourish the soul; are owing to its exhibiting Jesus Christ, and him crucified, to the believer's faith. It is in every sense true, "that the just shall live by faith;" and the whole virtue and efficacy of faith is derived from its Object.

The means, therefore, to be used constantly, to promote growth in grace, is the reading and hearing of the word. There can be no growth in grace without the word, any more than of the body without food. Here we have the object of every pious affection, and the motive to every holy act. Faith rests on the word; the excellence and beauty which enkindle our love are found in the word of God, and nowhere else; and hope could not exist, were it not for the firm promises with which the Scriptures abound. The sacraments are also means of promoting the hidden life of the believer; especially, the Lord's supper is eminently calculated to nourish piety in the heart; but the sacraments would be useless without the word. Their import cannot be known, but as it is exhibited by the word.

He, therefore, who would grow in grace, must be conversant with the holy Scriptures. He should turn over the sacred pages by day and by night, and should not merely read and hear, but take pains to understand. But with regard to many who are unskilful in the word of life, how can they understand unless some one teach them? Young Christians, especially, need instruction as much as children, and for this reason the ministry has been ordained. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists and teachers, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity

of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Christ's charge to Peter was, "Feed my sheep—feed my lambs;" and that of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "Feed the flock of Christ which is among you." It appears, then, that it belongs to the office of the ministry to furnish requisite nutriment for the support and growth of the people of God; and this provision is contained in the word of God, which they should clearly exhibit and rightly divide, so that each one may receive his portion in due season. And as God will certainly give efficacy to his own ordinances, when properly used, we may expect to derive from the authorized administration of the word and sacraments, such supplies of light and strength, as will enable us to grow in grace.

But as food will not nourish unless it is digested, so the mere hearing or reading of the word, will not cause us to advance in the divine life, unless we diligently meditate on the truths brought to our knowledge. Sacred meditation is a duty often mentioned in the Bible, and is one of great importance to enable the soul to grow in grace. It is needful that we should frequently abstract our thoughts from this world, and all its concerns, and fix them steadily and intensely on divine things. In order that truth should produce on the mind its full effect, it must not only be apprehended, but kept in the view of the mind, for a considerable time. Cursory thoughts of God and divine things make only a transient impression; but when, by devout meditation, these interesting objects are held up to view, the soul will perceive more and more of their beauty and importance, until often it will be completely absorbed in their contemplation: and such seasons of meditation are not only delightful, but leave a deep and salutary impression on the heart. And the more frequently such seasons occur, the more easy does it become to withdraw the soul from earth, and fix it on heavenly things; and our relish for this exercise will so increase, that instead of feeling the duty to be a burden, we shall esteem it our highest privilege; so that it will sometimes require self-denial to break off from our sacred meditations to attend on the performance of other duties. Christians who are much in the habit of meditation under the guidance of the divine word, cannot but increase in grace; for, in this employment, every holy affection is enkindled;—we obtain nearer views of Christ and of heaven, and learn to feel that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and that our home and our treasure are above.

It is the unhappiness of most professors, that they are so much involved in worldly occupations, that they find no suitable time for divine meditation: but is not the importance of the end to be gained, sufficient to make it proper and reasonable to redeem time for this purpose? Would it not be expedient, in imitation of our Lord, often to rise "a great while before day," that we might, without interruption, enjoy the benefit of holy contemplation? The hour will arrive, when we shall be forced to relinquish the world, and then, when we look back, we shall certainly be of the opinion, that that time was best improved, which was spent with God, and in preparation for eternity.

And here, I would remark, that whole days occasionally devoted to prayer and meditation, especially when joined with fasting, have been found eminently serviceable in promoting growth in grace. More progress is some-

times made in one such day of exclusive devotion to personal religion, than in weeks and months spent in the common way.

2. Another thing considered essential to the promotion of bodily health and vigour, is exercise. By this means every part of the body is rendered strong and active, and acquires its proper size and use. A child confined to one spot, and hindered from exercising its limbs, would be retarded in its growth, and be incapable of performing the most common actions of life. Without proper exercise, no one could run or walk with steadiness and agility, nor use his hands to any useful purpose. And here also, the analogy between the natural and spiritual life is complete. Exercise is as necessary to the inward as to the outward man. If the principle of spiritual life be not frequently and vigorously exercised, it will necessarily be weak and sickly. Even if any particular grace be not excited and brought into action, there will be a corresponding defect in the Christian character. As, therefore, we perform many actions merely for the sake of exercising the body, so we should seek opportunities of giving exercise to every virtue of the Christian life. This object should be kept daily in view, and steadily pursued; and where there is proper vigilance, there can be no want of occasions for bringing into act, all holy dispositions. Every person we meet, every event which occurs, will furnish opportunity for some pious or benevolent exercise. And in this view, even those incidents which in themselves are unpleasant, may be turned to a good account. Do we fall into the company of profane and wicked men? here is occasion given to exhibit some part of the Christian character, or to exercise some Christian grace. Do we meet with reproach and ill usage? well, let the spirit of Christian meekness and forbearance, or forgiveness, now be displayed. Are we suffering under bodily pain? then, let us learn to exercise patience and fortitude.

It has often been remarked, that benevolent affections are greatly strengthened by repeated exercise. The man who relieves the distressed, or supplies the wants of the poor, will be more ready to perform these works of mercy, after having done so a thousand times, than when first called upon to discharge that duty. It has sometimes been matter of surprise, that they who have already given most to forward public and benevolent objects, are always most prompt to contribute on any new occasion. But this is the natural and genuine effect of exercise. He, whose benevolence is often exerted, will ever be found to delight in doing good; and, when he has money to spare, he will find no way of spending it so agreeable, as to make it instrumental in promoting some benevolent object. And so strong may this feeling become, that it will be the most cogent motive to engage a man to put forth all his energy of mind and body, to procure the means of advancing the cause of religion.

But why need I dwell on this subject? for who is unacquainted with the power of habit? And what is habit, but a readiness and propensity to perform some action, induced by a repetition of that action? How great would be our moral improvement, if virtuous habits were as commonly cherished by exercise, as those which are vicious? But there are, also, habits of piety. A man may, by repeated exercise, form the habit of devotion; he may form the habit

of self-denial ; of spiritual-mindedness ; of penitence ; and, in short, of every good work.

But the neglect of exercising Christian virtues and dispositions has, on the other hand, a baleful tendency, and is altogether inconsistent with a growing state of piety.

If you would grow in grace, then, you must be an active Christian ; but your activity must commence in right motives of heart. Many are active in external things, while secret ambition and vain glory are the principles which in them are increased by exercise. But let us "exercise ourselves unto godliness," and in every species of benevolence, and also in the mortification of the sin that dwells within us. Thus shall we grow in every grace, and glorify God by bearing much fruit, and every variety of good fruit. According to the affectionate and earnest exhortation of Paul to the Corinthian believers, let us "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

3. A third thing necessary to the growth of the body, is a salubrious atmosphere. Nearly as much depends on good air, for the health of the natural life, as on wholesome food. Where the atmosphere is impregnated with pestilential vapours, it is difficult to escape disease, and much more so to increase in health and strength. Parents, who are solicitous about the welfare of their children, will place them, if possible, in a pure air. Well, there is a moral as well as a physical atmosphere. This is formed by the sentiments and character of society. Man must be connected, by social intercourse, with his fellow-men. The Christian religion does not require, nor even permit us, to go out of the world to avoid the wicked. And who is exempt from the influence of the prevalent opinions and practices of those around him ? But we find a great difference in different situations in the world. For, while some places have their whole moral atmosphere corrupted, so that no one can breathe it without the danger of being poisoned, others are comparatively safe and salubrious. When you enter some families, you are immediately sensible that you are walking on hallowed ground : every thing indicates that the fear of God is in that house ; and even the profane, when they enter, are overawed with some degree of reverence for the holiness which reigns there. But how different is the fact in regard to other dwellings ! The same observation may be made respecting different towns and villages. Where the influence of religion is predominant, every one feels the benefit, who is not abandoned to vice. But, alas ! how few are the places in which this happy state of things exists ! How does iniquity almost every where abound ! This prevalence of corruption is, no doubt, one principal reason why there is no more growth in piety among Christians. They are weak and sickly because they breathe a tainted atmosphere. While we see the men of this world sagacious in the selection of places of residence where health may be enjoyed, and where the circumstances are favourable to their prosperity in other respects, we seldom discover in Christians a similar wisdom in relation to their spiritual improvement. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Lot, smitten with the beauty and fertility of the land, pitched his tent "even unto Sodom," and there he abides. No wonder, then,

that in such a place his righteous soul is vexed from day to day—no wonder that he makes slow progress in grace—no wonder that his family become infected with the love of sinful pleasure—and no wonder, that being allied to the wicked inhabitants of that voluptuous town, most of them perish in the common destruction. Even his wife is set up as a perpetual memorial of the danger of looking back with sinful desire or regret upon the pleasures of the wicked.

There is a prevalent evil in our country, which is so common, that it seems to be but little noticed. It is the practice of many professors, of leaving places, where Christian society and the ordinances of the gospel are enjoyed, to dwell in the new settlements, without making any provision for the supply of their spiritual wants; influenced, altogether, by a regard to worldly profit. In those desolate regions, it often occurs, that months and years pass over their heads, without the hearing of one gospel sermon. Their children grow up, nearly as wild and irreligious as the heathen in their neighbourhood; not even enjoying, in many cases, the benefits of a common school. How, I would ask, will such persons be able to answer for the irreparable injury done to their families, by removing them far away from the house of God, and all the public means of grace? The question may be asked, whether a man who happens to reside where evangelical preaching is not heard, ought to change his residence, so as to live under the sound of the gospel? I would answer, assuredly; unless he has a reasonable ground of hope, that he can be personally useful to the people where he dwells, or can be instrumental in procuring the establishment of the means of grace among them. For what is the body to the soul? What comparison is there between growth in riches, and growth in grace? And who can be excused for exposing to eternal death, the souls of those committed to his care, for the sake of procuring for them a larger share of earthly property? If we would grow in grace; we must live within reach of the means of grace. Let Christians look well to this matter, in choosing their residence, and also in disposing of their children, for the purposes of education; or for acquiring a trade or profession. And I would say, further, when you have choice of preachers, or are about to call a pastor, see that you have regard to the spiritual welfare of your soul, and the souls of your families, in making your selection.

4. But as the spiritual life, as well as the natural, is subject to various diseases, in providing for its health and growth, we must have respect to medicine, as well as to food, exercise, and air. We know, that in regard to the body, if disease prey on the vitals, food, however nutritious, will answer no purpose in promoting growth; until, by appropriate remedies, the malady is healed. And the same is true with respect to the soul. When diseased, it requires medicine; and it is matter of gratitude, that our Great Physician has, for the most part, reserved these salutary applications to himself. Pastors, indeed, by a wise and tender application of the discipline of the church, may prevent and cut off many evils. Private rebuke, in Christian love, would often be medicinal to the erring Christian. But that process which is most common and effectual to recover such a soul, is to cause it to pass through

the furnace of affliction. Because of the salutary effect of afflictions, in awakening the conscience, exciting to prayer, weaning us from the world, and breaking and humbling our hearts, they are a part of that provision which Christ has made for his disciples; and are accordingly promised, in close connexion with the sweetest blessings which he bestows. As gold is not only tried in the fire, but purified from its dross, so the believer comes out of the furnace often greatly improved. Let no one, therefore, think strange, "concerning the fiery trial." "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." These trials we are not to seek, but leave the application of them to our faithful Redeemer. But although it is not ours to employ this means of advancement in piety, yet, when we are cast down into the vale of sorrow, it is incumbent on us to improve these afflictive dispensations, and to esteem them among the most effectual means of growing in grace. "No chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them who are exercised thereby." When was it known, that a backslider was reclaimed without the severity of the rod? And where do we behold religion in its highest exercise, and loveliest appearance, but in affliction? Therefore, one speaking from deep experience said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." When, therefore, O Christian, you enjoy this powerful means of healing the diseases of the soul, consider the benefit which may accrue to you, and yield not to weak despondency, nor to excessive sorrow; but with vigour set yourself to make such improvement of God's dealings with you, as may eventuate in your abundant growth in grace.

5. There is one thing more which demands our attention, in considering the means of growing in grace; and that of more importance than all the rest; for without it, all other means will be useless. You will readily understand that I speak of the influences of the Holy Spirit; with which I connect importunate, persevering prayer, as the means appointed by God, for obtaining those sanctifying influences. Of what avail would be the husbandman's ploughing and sowing, if the early and latter rain should be withheld? And what would be the efficacy of all our reading, and praying, and meditating, and fasting; and of all our trials and afflictions, if the Spirit of God should be withdrawn? By the Holy Spirit, we obtain light, and faith, and indeed every good thought which ever arises in our minds; "for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," "who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." But the promise of the Spirit does not supersede the use of the ordinary means of grace;—it gives them all their worth and efficacy. And as this rich gift of God, this sum of all "good things," is particularly and solemnly promised in answer to prayer, I have chosen to consider this powerful means, in this place. Without prayer, the spiritual life cannot exist, much less can it grow. Prayer is the breathing of the "new man" after God; it is the instrument by which we resist every enemy, and acquire every blessing. The prayer of faith removes mountains. It unlocks the treasures of grace;

and brings into the soul that blessed peace, which Christ promised to his disciples before he left them. But when we have declared, that the promise of the Spirit is made to prayer, with the strongest possible assurances of its being answered, we have said every thing ; for that heart into which the Comforter comes, and takes up his abode, possesses the pledge, the earnest, and the seal of every blessing, in earth and heaven, which can be of real benefit to the Christian. "All things," says Paul, "are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Now, Christian, having set before you a view of the means necessary to be used to promote growth in grace, what remains but that you, without delay, apply yourself, with increasing diligence, to the work before you ? As this is a gradual progress, and as much of your time has already run to waste, it is urgently necessary, that you work while it is called to-day ; especially, as, for aught you know, your remaining time may be very short.

Aged Christian, when you look back on the race which you have run, have you not much reason to bewail your past negligence ? Do you not now see and feel, that many golden opportunities have been suffered to pass away without improvement ? In regard to the past, however, nothing can be done, but to repent. Yet from the loss sustained in time past, we may derive a powerful motive to make every exertion to grow in grace, during the short period that yet remains. Let us, then, loosen our worldly attachments ;—let us place the grave and all the solemn realities which lie beyond it, full before our eyes ;—and let us "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." It is, dear brethren, high time for us to have all doubts resolved on this momentous subject. Doubt, as well as positive guilt, will be a troublesome companion on a death-bed. As you come near to your Father's house, then, let your thoughts fix on those numerous mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for his humble followers. We shall soon have no more concern with ~~this~~ world ; why then should we be guilty of the folly of setting our affections upon it ?

And, to younger Christians, let me say affectionately, if you cannot find, in the aged examples for imitation, yet surely if you listen to our experience, you may derive from us, lessons of warning. When we see you pressing forward, with all your sails expanded, we wish you a prosperous voyage ; but when we reflect on the hidden rocks and quicksands which lie in your course, we cannot but fear for your safety ; especially, when we behold so many wrecks on every side.

Finally, I would say to all Christians, of every age, and of every condition, if you would be useful in life, and if you would be eminently happy, both here and hereafter, **GROW IN GRACE.** Amen.

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LII.

BY BERIAH GREEN, A.M.

BRANDON, VERMONT.

THE LONG FORBEARANCE OF GOD TOWARD SINNERS.

2 PETER, iii. 9.—*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to-us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

WICKED men, in the days of the apostle Peter, perceived that Jehovah long delayed to punish sin. This delay encouraged them to hope, that He would *never* punish it. The apostle viewed the subject in a very different light. He was as forward as themselves to notice and acknowledge the “long-suffering of God,”—the delay of Justice to smite the sinner. But a very different construction did he put upon the divine forbearance. God had not forgotten his threatenings; but, “unwilling that any should perish,” He was waiting, in His “long-suffering to-them-ward,” for transgressors to “turn from their evil ways.”

It is the object of this discourse, to illustrate the affecting truth, THAT GOD WAITETH LONG FOR SINNERS TO REPENT.

I. *At all the different stages of life, through which they pass, God waiteth for sinners to repent and obey his commands.*—Men are capable of obeying God, when they are *very young*. Obedience to His commands is the work of the *heart*; and every body knows, that a little child is capable of exercising the affections of the heart. When little children, then, are capable of knowing, that there *is* a God; that He is their heavenly Father; that He is great, and wise, and good, they are capable of fearing Him, of loving Him, of obeying Him. And at every step of their course through life, from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age;—from the cradle to the grave, they are capable of obeying God; and at every step of this course, God is waiting for them to repent and devote themselves to his service.

For the sake of illustration, let it be said, that, at *four years of age*, a child is capable of repentance and obedience to the injunctions of the Bible.—When the sun rises on the day, that makes him four years old—that makes him capable of religious affections and doings—God looks down upon him, and waits for his repentance. Hour after hour slides away, until mid-

day ; hour after hour slides away until the setting of the sun, and God is still waiting for his repentance. He waits till the rising—till the setting of *another* sun. At length the Sabbath comes. The child sees its sweet light—breathes its hallowed air—spends its sacred hours. All the day long, Jehovah waits to see him “turn from his evil ways,” but waits in vain. In like manner, another Sabbath comes ; in like manner it is spent ; till the flowers of summer are exchanged for the fruits of autumn ; till the fruits of autumn are exchanged for the snows of winter ; till another birthday, and a third, and a fourth, are seen and spent ; till childhood is exchanged for youth. All this time, God is waiting for the repentance of that child. And still he waits. That youth grows up to be a man. He is at the head of a family. When a child was first placed within his arms, the eye of God was fixed upon him, to see whether even now, he would repent and “obey the gospel.” He waits upon him hour after hour—day after day—week after week—month after month—year after year, till his children are, some of them dead, and some of them grown up to years of maturity. At length, a few gray hairs are seen upon his head. God waits for his repentance, till they are multiplied—till the snows of age whiten his locks. His memory and understanding become enfeebled—his eye grows dim—his steps falter—he leans upon a staff—he totters upon the brink of the grave ; and still, *still* Jehovah waits for his repentance ! Look at his course from a child of four years old till youth—from youth till manhood—from manhood till old age, and say, as you see God waiting for him to repent and embrace the Saviour, may it not be asserted with strong emphasis, that Jehovah waiteth *long* for the sinner to “hear his voice ?”

II. *Jehovah waits long, to mark the effect of the various and powerful means He employs with sinners, to bring them to repentance.* In the Bible, He urges home upon them the most interesting, striking, and important truths—truths fitted to enlighten the understanding, to arouse the conscience, to reach, dissolve, amend the heart. He speaks to them, moreover, in the arrangements of his providence. Now, He appears before them in the form of “goodness,” and now, of “severity ;” now He causes his sun to cheer, and now the storm to overwhelm them : to-day He causes them “to sow in tears,” and to-morrow, to “reap in joy.”—And then, He permits them to witness the operation of his hand in the conviction and conversion of their fellow-sinners ; and perhaps sends his Holy Spirit, to move upon their souls. *All this time*, He stands *waiting* for them to hear his voice—obey his word—embrace his offers of mercy.

A pious mother retired to her closet with her little son. She fixed her eyes kindly upon him, and in a very tender manner—such a manner, as none but a pious mother could adopt—began to speak with him on the interests of his precious soul. She spoke to him of his guilt and danger ; of the power and goodness of his heavenly Father ; of the “grace and truth” of Jesus Christ. She made him kneel by her side—put the words of

prayer into his mouth—and then, with her soft hand gently pressed upon his head, she poured forth “strong crying” and earnest supplication to God for his forgiveness and salvation. And *God* was there, *waiting* for that child’s repentance.

One of the companions of this child, while engaged in sport, was crushed by the fall of a heavy body. He gasped and died. He was carried home to his afflicted parents; laid in a coffin, and borne to the “burial-place.” Around his new-made grave, all his companions were assembled; and just before the coffin was let down into the “dark and narrow house,” the minister spoke kindly, yet earnestly, to the children who stood around him. “Ah, my dear children,” said he, “what if one of you in that unexpected moment had been cut down, and sent into eternity—would you have gone up to Heaven, or would you have gone down to Hell? *You* too, in “such an hour as you think not,” may die. O, then, prepare to die! While you shed tears upon this coffin, see to it, that you repent of your sins, and give up your hearts to the blessed Saviour.”—And while the preacher spoke, *God* was there. His eye was fixed upon the heart of that child, for whom his mother had been praying in the closet, to see if he would *now* obey his voice—would *now* repent.

This child grew up to be a man, without repentance. And now it pleased the gracious Saviour to pour out the Holy Spirit upon the circle of his friends. He saw many of them convinced of sin—stung with guilt—imploping mercy. Some of them he saw, penitent and humble, at the foot of the cross; he witnessed their godly grief, and heard their song of salvation. And now, one and another of these friends urged him with many tears, to forsake his sins and devote himself to God. And *God* was there, *waiting* for his repentance.

As he approached the evening of life, he began to lean upon the arm of a beloved son. That son, he called “his stay and his staff.” Support and solace he expected from him, when the infirmities of old age should multiply. But this expectation was suddenly blasted. And when that son was laid in the grave, he felt, that his own heart was in the coffin. In that hour, a tempest, dark and terrible, beat upon him. And as he turned from the grave, feeling himself bereaved, forsaken, desolate, *God* was there, *waiting* for his repentance.—Who can look upon the *variety of means* which God is continually employing with men, from childhood to old age, to bring them to hear his voice, without perceiving in the strongest light, that He *waiteth long* for their repentance?

III. *God waits for sinners to repent, while they are engaged in laying out and accomplishing various and numerous designs.* How early do men begin to employ their thoughts, and task their powers, in plans and efforts to gratify their wishes and humour their inclinations! How soon, after they begin to breathe, do they fix their eyes upon some object of pursuit, and with what eagerness and zeal do they go in quest of it—how promptly

and perseveringly do they strive to lay their hands upon it! When they find, in obtaining it, that it fails to make them happy, how soon do they discover *some other* object of pursuit! This overtaken, and found to be "vanity and vexation of spirit," body and soul are tasked to obtain a third, and a fourth. And so the man moves on. Disappointed in one design, he engages in another; and, from the cradle to the grave, is *busy*—it may be "out of breath"—in planning and accomplishing a thousand undertakings. And *all this time*, God is *waiting* for his repentance!

Before he repents and becomes a Christian, the child thinks that he must learn to read with readiness and ease; the youth must complete his education, and make his way upon the stage of active life; the man must establish himself in business, build a house, educate his children, and provide for his family; the old man must settle his affairs, and assist his children in happily establishing themselves in the world;—and at every step of this course, while one thing after another seizes on the attention, engrosses the thoughts, drinks up the spirits, and wastes the strength, God is waiting to be heard and obeyed! Does he not, then, wait *long* for the sinner's repentance?

IV. The statement, laid down in the beginning of this discourse, is strikingly confirmed by a view of *the very short time requisite for the exercise of true repentance*, compared with the everlasting peace and joy which might follow. All His requisitions, Jehovah aims at the "inner man." Obedience must, of course, consist in the exercises of the heart. Grief for sin—confidence in Jesus Christ—love to God, are all exercises of the heart. Now let me ask, How much time is requisite for the exercise of any of the affections?—Is an hour? Is a single *minute*? How much time, think ye, is requisite for an exercise of holy love, or godly fear, or pious confidence? How much time do men require to fasten their affections on their *chosen idols*? When the miser sees a piece of gold, how long may it be before his soul is moved with *desire*? In view of the object of his lust, must an hour pass away before the sensualist can put forth an inward exercise? Amidst obvious dangers, do men wait long before their *fears* are awakened; or their *confidence* is fixed on a known friend, who offers aid? So far as *time* is concerned, the voice of God may be heard—Christian feeling may be exercised "*in the twinkling of an eye*." Had this been their choice, all the inward exercises which sinners have put forth, their life long, might have been in full agreement with the precepts of the Bible. But while they have never had *any* pious feelings, the eye of God has been fixed upon their hearts, *waiting*, from hour to hour, for an exercise of godly sorrow and holy obedience! Has He not, then, *waited long*?

Thus God waiteth for sinners to repent at every step of their course through life; while He employs a great variety of means, which are fitted to bring them to repentance; while they are expending their strength in various and numerous worldly undertakings; and all this, when, in a *sin-*

gle moment, they might hear His voice, obey His requisitions, and secure the salvation of their souls!

In review of the train of thought presented in this discourse, I remark,

1. *God is very gracious.*—While He waits for sinners to repent, He waits for them to accept of the largest benefits which they could receive; and He delays to inflict upon them a punishment richly deserved and terribly severe. This punishment nothing but repentance can avert. Every day—every hour—every moment they refuse to hear the voice of God, they deserve to die; to feel the crushing weight of the Almighty hand. Every hour they refuse to repent, they are increasing their guilt—are more and more provoking eternal Justice to “cut them down.” How *very gracious*, then, is that Being, who can wait—*wait long*—for their repentance! While Jehovah waits for their repentance, moreover, He waits to bestow upon them the *choicest benefits*. The pardon of sin, peace with conscience and with God, “a hope full of immortality,” are benefits unutterably precious. But precious as they are, they are the very benefits which Jehovah offers to every true penitent. And what shall we say of that Redeemer, who not only brings the richest benefits from heaven to earth, to offer to the penitent sinner, but also waits, *waits long*, for him to accept the offer?—waits, till he rises from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age?—waits, while the most powerful means are, in various ways, employed to persuade the sinner to repent?—waits, while the sinner spends hour after hour in business or amusement; in making out worldly plans, and prosecuting worldly enterprises?—waits, while “in the twinkling of an eye,” the sinner might hear His voice, and lay hold of “eternal life?” What will you say of a Being, who, so provoked by the very one whom He comes to bless, can wait long for him “to come to himself,” and be blessed? Is He not *very gracious*? Such, poor sinner, whoever thou art, who hast abused the kindness of the Saviour, such is *the patience of thy God*! O, think of this. And while he waits, fly to His feet, cast thyself upon His mercy, and know by sweet experience the riches of His grace.

2. If God has waited long for sinners to repent, *then are they very ungrateful and stubborn in their refusal to hear His voice.*—It argues great hardihood in guilt, for a poor, dependent, dying creature, to turn away from the overtures and threatenings of Almighty God. To do this once, and in *any* circumstances, must be presumptuous and Heaven-daring. The mightiest angel in heaven would tremble at the thought of once slighting the word of God. But impenitent men do this all their life long—in the tenderness of childhood—in the bloom of youth—amid the business of active life—and under the cares and sorrows of old age! Notwithstanding the various and powerful means which are employed to bring them to repentance; the rich instructions of the Bible, the affectionate and earnest

entreaties of Christian ministers and pious friends ; notwithstanding " the goodness and the severity of God ;" all the joys with which He refreshes them, and all the sorrows with which He saddens them ; notwithstanding the remonstrances of conscience, the fear of death, and the prospect of hell, still they refuse to obey the voice of Jehovah. Though they lay out a thousand plans, and accomplish a thousand designs, and meet with a thousand disappointments, they refuse to obey the voice of Jehovah. Within the compass of a single moment, they might, if they would, give Him their hearts ; yet they *will* not. This, fellow-sinner, is to be *set* upon a course of disobedience. This is *stubbornness in guilt*. O think, I beseech you, *how often* you have turned away from Him, who " speaketh to you from heaven ;" think *how long* He has *waited* to be gracious to you ! And can you think of this, and refuse to confess, with a bleeding heart, that you have been indeed *a stubborn sinner* !

3. If God has waited long for sinners to repent, *then they ought to be urged, in the most impressive manner, to repent without the least delay.*—Fellow-sinner, you have long been familiar with the grand features of the Christian faith. Long has the Bible been placed within your reach. Often have you been permitted to visit the house of prayer. Frequently have you been admonished by pious friends, the providence of God, the influences of the Holy Spirit, of your guilt and danger. God hath waited long for you to hear His voice ; to repent and devote yourself to His service. Have you not long refused to examine your own heart—to feel your guilt—to seek forgiving grace ? Ah, sinner, it is *too late* to think of putting off any longer the concerns of your soul—of your eternity ! Already have you travelled fearful lengths in the broad road. Venture not, then, another step ! *To-day*, hear the voice of God. It is at your peril, if you suffer another sun to go down on your impenitence ! *Now*, then, while God is waiting to be gracious, I beseech you, repent and live !

4. If God waiteth long for sinners to repent, *then must the final doom of the impenitent be exceedingly aggravated.*—The day of judgment will be dark and terrible to the fallen angels, for whose benefit no Saviour is provided—no overtures of mercy made. Oh, then, what must that day be—how dark and terrible, to sinful men, who all their life long enjoyed the largest privileges—for whose benefit the blood of the Son of God was offered ! With what agony will they look back upon life, and see that, every step of their course, they abused the grace of God ! How must it cut them to the heart, to remember, that from the cradle to the grave, the voice of eternal mercy was sounding in their ears, and *they would not hear* ! How can they bear to hear the same lips, which a thousand times offered them salvation, now thunder forth the sentence of their condemnation ! O, how deep a hell must be their prison, who scorn the beseeching voice of the great God, and the atoning blood of the LAMB !

Whoever thou art, delaying sinner, it is in my heart earnestly to *plead with thee*. How canst thou go madly on in the road to death! Who can think of thy coming doom, and not feel compassion? O, slight not thy God, thy Saviour, thy Judge, who *waits* for thee to-day. Hasten to His feet; for His brow is gathering frowns: "His wrath abideth on thee:" and to-morrow He may swear, *You shall never see my rest!* O, then, "a great ransom cannot deliver thee!" Then there must be *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever!*

SERMON LIII.

By BERIAH GREEN, A.M.

EVANGELICAL TRUTHS OFFENSIVE TO THE UNRENEWED BUT JOYOUS TO THE BELIEVER.

MATT. xi. 6.—*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

In the immediate connection of this passage, we are informed, that John the Baptist sent forth two of his disciples, to present to Jesus Christ this inquiry: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It is not perhaps easy to determine, by what motive John was influenced in sending such a message. Amidst the gloom of the dungeon in which he was confined, some remaining doubts respecting the character of Jesus Christ might have perplexed and troubled him, from which he would gladly be freed; or it might have been his object, to give his disciples an opportunity of listening to the instructions, and witnessing the miracles of Christ, in the hope that they would devote themselves to the person and cause of the Son of God. In reply to the inquiry of his illustrious forerunner, Jesus sent an account of the deeds of power and mercy which were daily wrought by His hand. The blind, He informed him, received their sight; the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed; and the deaf heard; the dead were raised, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them. Works like these most clearly evinced his Messiahship; and, however ill-adapted to the condition of a king, the circumstances in which Jesus then appeared, might seem to be; however His character, and movements, and doctrines might offend Jewish prejudice, and hurt worldly pride; He assured John, that he was a truly happy man, who should cordially confide in Him as the Saviour of the world.—"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The only term in the text which requires explanation, is the word "offended." In its literal meaning, it describes the condition of one who has stumbled and fallen upon some object which lay in his way. In the New Testament, it is used in a figurative sense; and describes a state of

error and sin, and especially that most destructive error, of rejecting the Gospel of Christ. Hence, some who rejected the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship, on the ground of His obscure birth, are said to have been "offended in Him:" they spurned the overtures of mercy which He made, and thus involved themselves in guilt and ruin. Many things in the character and instructions of Jesus were at war with worldly pride and prejudice. Not a few would turn away from His efforts to bless and save them. Happy, however, *truly happy*, were they who should confide in Him as the Saviour of the world.

The declaration of the Saviour, thus explained, it is my present object to illustrate and apply. In doing this, I shall proceed on the ground of the following statement:—

THE PARTICULARS IN THE CHARACTER AND INSTRUCTIONS OF JESUS, WHICH ARE MATTERS OF OFFENCE TO THE UNRENEWED MIND, ARE SOURCES OF HAPPINESS TO THE CHRISTIAN.

The points, which, in this discourse, I shall bring forward to illustrate and sustain this statement, you may find in the **TWO-FOLD NATURE OF JESUS**; in the **DOCTRINES** which He taught, especially the doctrines of **ATONEMENT**, of **THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE INFLUENCE**, and of **DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY**; and in the **PRECEPTS** by which He bound his disciples, **TO BE HUMBLE, and WHOLLY DEVOTED TO HIS SERVICE.**

FIRST; In the **TWO-FOLD NATURE OF JESUS**, *the unrenewed mind finds matter of offence, but the Christian a source of consolation and joy.* In examining the pages of the Bible, it is easily seen, that two classes of attributes, clearly distinct, and exceedingly different from each other, are ascribed to Him. On the one hand, in tracing His course from the cradle to the cross—from His birth to His death—we see Him exhibiting all the attributes (sin only excepted) which pertain to the human family. He grows in stature, and increases in wisdom; he hungers and thirsts; weeps and rejoices; feels aversion, attachment, indignation; he keenly suffers beneath the various trials to which he is subjected, falls into the hands of his enemies, and dies on the cross. On the other hand, he is presented to our view as the true God, omniscient, omnipresent, almighty; the creator of all things; the upholder of all things; the searcher of all hearts; one who can forgive sin; the Judge of "the quick and the dead." In these different views of the character of Jesus, the unrenewed mind—especially if it be of a philosophic turn—if it be affected with intellectual pride—finds many difficulties. The attributes ascribed in the Gospel to Jesus, seem to such an one to be inconsistent with each other. He proudly, perhaps peevishly, demands, How can God be united with man? How can "two distinct natures be combined in one person?" How is this consistent with the divine dignity and majesty? What becomes of personal iden-

tity? Who can explain; who understand; who believe a doctrine so full of mystery? Thus, perplexed and embarrassed with the difficulties which he finds in the character of Jesus, "he is offended," and involves himself in the fearful error of rejecting the Gospel.

But the two-fold nature of Jesus opens to the mind of the *Christian* a deep source of consolation and joy. In His human nature, he beholds in Jesus a "faithful and merciful high-priest," who can be touched with a feeling of his infirmities; who, having been subject to the fiercest assaults of temptation, can pity and succour the tempted; who, having Himself been a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," can sympathize in his sorrows; who, having Himself felt, and keenly felt, almost every variety of suffering, can "lift up the bowed down," "strengthen the feeble knees," "bind up the broken heart;" who, having Himself been subject to the horrors of a most dreadful death, can sustain and cheer his people, even on a dying bed. And then the human nature of Jesus, veiling the insufferable glories of His godhead, invites the Christian, borne down with a sense of guilt, to approach Him with holy boldness, to pour his own desires into His blessed bosom with the sweetest confidence.

In His divine nature, the Christian sees in Jesus a Saviour, who is always with him; who is acquainted with all his thoughts and desires; whose eye searches his inmost soul; who can forgive his sins; tread down his foes; bear him forward in the rugged path of duty; who can sustain him amidst tempests, floods, and fires; who can open before him the gate of heaven, and crown him with eternal life. What could he ask, which might promote his safety, consolation, eternal blessedness, which he doth not find in Jesus? In His character, he finds the very attributes which he needs in a Saviour and Redeemer. While he leaves the worldly man, blinded with his own pride and self-sufficiency, to sit in judgment, if he dares, upon the character of the "Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us," and to spurn His overtures of mercy, because that character was not conformed to the dogmas of human philosophy, himself is unspeakably happy in a cordial confidence in Jesus as the Saviour of the world.

A SECOND illustration of the subject of this discourse, I find in **SOME OF THE PECULIAR DOCTRINES WHICH JESUS TAUGHT.** The first doctrine which I shall mention in this connection, is this:—*The penitent sinner is pardoned and saved simply on account of the atonement which Jesus made by His death upon the cross.* In the New Testament, this doctrine is taught with great clearness; the utmost stress is put upon it. At one time we hear the Saviour declare, that "except we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man, we have no life in us;" at another, we read the assertion of St. Paul, that "through His blood, we have redemption, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" and again, we listen to the song of heaven, and learn, that the "ransomed of the Lord" ascribe their

salvation "unto Him who loved them, and washed them in His own blood." How often does this doctrine, thus stated, offend the unrenewed mind! One man can see no propriety in permitting the innocent to suffer for the guilty; another thinks it a strange and unnatural statement, that the Son of God should die for the sons of men; a third can see no necessity in the case, which could call for the endurance of the agonies of crucifixion. Why, he demands, as if he were fit to be the counsellor of the Most High, why could not God forgive sin without an atonement? One man can see nothing in the doctrine of the cross, which is suited to the dignity of human nature; and another verily believes, that it is fitted to relax moral obligation, and encourage men to live on in sin. Thus pride throws a hedge around the cross! Thus hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, stumble and fall on the Rock of Calvary! Thus are they offended with a crucified Saviour! The redeeming kindness which bursts forth from His bleeding brow and bleeding heart, they spurn! But O, how different are the feelings which a view of Christ awakens in the bosom of the believer! The cross, he perceives, is the very expedient which his necessities as a sinner hastening to the judgment demanded. On this ground he may be forgiven, and the authority of the divine law maintained, and the integrity and glory of the divine character preserved. While, therefore, he looks upon the cross,—to adopt the beautiful and truly touching illustration of the immortal Bunyan,—while "he looks upon the cross, his burthen is loosed from his shoulders, falls from his back, and is lost in the sepulchre beneath. Glad and lightsome, he says with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.' See him, while he stands to look and wonder—filled with surprise, that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burthen. He looks and looks again, even till the springs that are in his head send the waters down his cheeks." In the cross, moreover, a display of the divine perfections, clear, attractive, glorious, arrests his attention, and moves his soul. Here, "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." The lustre in which the sacrifice of Jesus exhibits the mingled justice and benevolence of the divine character, fires the Christian with love to the ever-blessed God—binds him to His throne—constrains him with joy to obey the divine commands—and to repose the liveliest, sweetest confidence in the divine promises. From the bottom of his heart, he sings, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ!"

The Saviour taught, moreover, *that divine influences were necessary, to bring men cordially to embrace the gospel.* "No man," he asserted, "could come to Him," unless he was "drawn by the Father." And in accordance with this doctrine, He assured the apostles, that he would send the Holy Spirit into the world, to convince men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. All the Christian graces, moreover, are set forth in the Bible, as "the fruits of the Spirit." Different men view this doctrine in a very different light, and with very different feelings. You have heard,

perhaps, and shuddered as you heard, the man, who gloried in the strength and acuteness of his mind and the purity of his morals, demand, "What are these boasted effects, which are ascribed to the operations of the Holy Spirit? Are they not repentance, faith, submission to the divine will, obedience, generally, to the commands of God? And are not these the proper exercises of the human mind?—produced by the influence of motives, just as the mind is wrought upon in its ordinary exercises? What need, then, of referring such results to the agency of the divine Spirit? Is it not irrational, unphilosophical, to do so? How can I receive a doctrine which is so much at war with my philosophy? Weak men may rely upon the promised aid of the Holy Spirit in their efforts to win heaven. I know not, that I need such assistance. Why should I ask it? Such mysticism I cannot but reject." Where these views have not been expressed in words, have you not *seen* them—*every day*, have you not *seen* them acted out in human conduct? Are you not acquainted with thousands, who stubbornly or stupidly refuse to offer a single prayer to Heaven for divine assistance in "working out their salvation?" Nay, hearer, art not "*thou* the man!" living from day to day, without one earnest aspiration for the aid of the Holy Spirit? And is not thy pride this moment hurt—art thou not offended, while I assure thee, on divine authority, that without this aid, thou wilt never take a single step in the "way that leadeth unto life?"

But will you permit me to repeat what I heard the humble Christian say, while marking with intense solicitude the path of duty and of usefulness? I heard him say, "I am commanded to let my light shine—to do good—to fill up life with acts of beneficence—with deeds of piety and usefulness. I am to do my utmost in my family, in the circle where I move, to multiply the trophies of redeeming grace—to extend the limits of the church. Nor am I left to confide in the efficacy of moral suasion—in the unaided power of such instruction as I may be able to impart, and of such motives as I may be able to set forth. Alas, I might as well hope to still the tempest, as to subdue the human heart by moral suasion! It is made of 'sterner stuff,' than to yield to such an agency. But in the power and grace of the Holy Ghost, my confidence is fixed. He is my Almighty Helper—He can break the hardest heart—bow the stoutest will. He can crown my efforts of faith and love with the highest results, and the largest success. I am commanded, moreover, 'to grow in grace'—to press forward in the straight and narrow way. But I am not left to my own unaided strength. Alas, what were that to resist the violence of inbred lusts, and the impulse of temptation! But I am permitted to cast myself upon the Holy Spirit. He can make my strength equal to my day—can bear me on in the face of the most trying difficulties—can make me conqueror, and more than conqueror, over every enemy of my soul!" And he lifted up his eyes, beaming with joy, and blessed God for "His unspeakable gift."

Again; *The moral government of God*, as set forth in the Bible, awakens very different feelings in different bosoms. It is to the unrenewed mind a

bitter thought, that God "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;" and ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. The doctrine, that God is sovereign in the bestowment of his favours, he cannot bear. How often does it fill his heart with envy and his mouth with blasphemy! How often have you heard it said—it is well if you yourselves have not indulged such thoughts—that according to this doctrine Heaven is partial, unjust; influenced by "respect of persons;" that it places the character of God and the dispensations of his grace, in an odious light!—I shall not soon forget the frank acknowledgment of a man, of vigorous mind and large attainments,—a man who had gloried in the purity of his morals and the integrity of his character, that in view of the discriminative grace of God, he permitted *even the fires of hell to prey upon his heart*. And when he remembered, that Jehovah would make all things, even the designs and movements of his most fiery foes, subservient to his most holy purposes, *his soul was tortured*. He burned to make war with Heaven, and wrest the sceptre from the Most High! If you have been conversant with "revivals of religion," when the human heart is exhibited in its nakedness, you have witnessed similar acknowledgments. How often have you seen the enmity of the "carnal mind" waked up and drawn forth by a view of the absolute, universal government of God! But not so the Christian! The discriminative grace of God, he contemplates with deep delight. But for this, himself—all men—had perished. He regards it, as the last effort of redeeming kindness, to save at least a remnant of this ruined world. And when he remembers, amidst all the darkness and confusion of the scene around him, that Jehovah will bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness—will make "all things" promote the glory of His throne, and the happiness of the universe, he opens his lips in songs of thanksgiving and praise. To him, it is a sweet thought—a thought full of calm and pure enjoyment, that "the Lord, He is God." And when from the everlasting hills, the song of triumphant, exulting Heaven breaks upon his ear, with all his soul he responds, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

A THIRD illustration of the subject of this discourse, I find in some of the PECULIAR PRECEPTS OF JESUS. The first precept, to which I would direct your attention, binds us to be *clothed with humility*. We are required to become like little children; to esteem others better than ourselves; to imitate the example of Jesus, who did not hesitate to perform for his inferiors the most humble offices. No injunction can be more directly at war with the cherished tendencies of unsanctified nature. 'What! must I take my place in the dust—own, that I am vile, guilty, hell-deserving—admit the accuracy of the description, which sets me forth as a loathsome and odious creature—approve of the sentence of condemnation, which would consign me to final and eternal wo! Must I accept of the favour of God, as an undeserved benefit!—on my knees, cry for pity! Must I ascribe every

blessing I enjoy ; every favorable prospect and good hope, to the mercy of Heaven ! Must I, in this spirit, be contented with all the allotments of Providence ; find matter of devout thankfulness amidst my heaviest afflictions and severest trials ; “ esteem others better than myself ; ” occupy with diligence whatever station of usefulness falls to my lot, however obscure ; and finally, resign up my breath to Him who gave it, with the prayer of the publican, “ God be merciful to me a sinner, ” upon my lips ! To obey this injunction, were to dishonor myself—were to fall, voluntarily, from the elevation to which the God of nature has raised me. How can I embrace a religion, which bears so hardly upon whatever is generous, dignified, aspiring in man ? Thus are unrenewed men offended with the gospel—thus do they refuse “ to humble themselves under the hand of God. ”

But in obeying the injunction, “ Be clothed with humility, ” the *Christian* finds a deep source of pure enjoyment. Self-abasement, he perceives, is appropriate to his character and prospects. No sooner does he take the place, assigned by the wisdom of God, than a calm delight sweetly spreads itself upon his soul. A full acquiescence he feels in the dispensations of grace and the arrangements of Providence. He is no more tormented with the aspirings of pride, the fires of envy, the goadings of discontent. In whatever state he is, he has learned to be content ; whether he sways a sceptre or sweeps a chimney, he occupies with cheerfulness his appropriate station of usefulness, and looks forward with joy to a place at his Master's feet in heaven. What Christian cannot modestly appropriate to himself the apt, delicate, and striking description, which Bunyan gives of one in the valley of humiliation—“ There was a kind of sympathy betwixt that valley and him. He would now be up every morning by break of day, tracing and walking to and fro in the valley ; he would even lie down, embrace the ground, and kiss the very flowers, which grew around him. ”

But nowhere do unrenewed men stumble more frequently, or fall more grievously, than upon the injunction of the Gospel, *which bids us to devote our all to Jesus Christ*. They cannot but see, that we are called to give up life itself, if the interests of the Christian cause required the surrender. In accordance with this statement, they hear Jesus say in the plainest terms, that whosoever refuses to forsake all he hath for his sake cannot be his disciple. Time, talents, property—spirit, soul, and body—whatever we are, have, can accomplish, the Gospel demands at our hands. This demand is directly opposed to the insatiable cravings of selfishness—that selfishness, which in some of its thousand forms, reigns predominant in every unsanctified bosom. Smitten with the love of pleasure—ambitious of renown—or poisoned with the “ lust of lucre, ” the unrenewed man cannot bear the thought of “ giving up his idols. ” “ What has he more ? ” To devote his all to Jesus Christ ; to live only to please Heaven ; to aim in every enterprise to glorify God and build up the church ; to lay out all

his time and strength in efforts to do good :—this is too much. His heart grows cold within him, to think of such a course. He looks upon it as a protracted martyrdom—a living death! He is prepared, therefore, sourly and stubbornly to resist the injunction, which binds him to pursue it. Like the young ruler, who went away “sorrowful” from Christ, when he bade him forsake all and follow Him, he resolves to gratify his selfish feelings at the hazard of damnation! Is not this the steadfast resolution of hundreds and thousands, both within and without the pale of the visible church?

But O, how different are the feelings of the Christian! No sooner does he consecrate himself, as a living sacrifice to the Son of God, than a thousand sources of enjoyment, of which he had never dreamed, are opened around him. He is brought into the society of the holy angels—of the King of glory. The presence of the Redeemer spreads the air of heaven upon every thing around him. He is a co-worker with God!—is engaged in the same enterprises—is pursuing the same sublime designs. His interests are identified with the interests of Jesus. “Holiness to the Lord” is inscribed upon whatever he is, and hath. As the servant of God, he not only moves under the “great Taskmaster’s eye,” but beneath the protection of His shield—amidst the light of His countenance. What has he to do with corroding care—with tormenting anxiety? What to him are the aspirings of ambition—the lust of pleasure—the graspings and gripings of avarice? He leaves those, who will, to plot and plan; to tug and sweat; to run, and wrestle, and fight, that they may snuff up wind and feed on ashes. *His* life is “hid with Christ in God.” *His Master* will provide for his interests—care for his welfare—secure his happiness. In the service of such a Master, he exults “to do with his might what his hands find to do,” and thus employed, he feels, that there is a step only betwixt him and heaven.

Well might Jesus declare, that he, who was not offended in Him, was blessed; for those very points, in which unrenewed minds find matters of offence, obviously and largely contribute to his happiness.

The subject discussed in this discourse illustrates *the wisdom of conducting our religious inquiries with modesty and candor.*—Thus conducted, our attention will be directed—not to the difficulties, with which religion may seem to be embarrassed, but—to *the facts by which it is supported.* These, we shall easily perceive, present a body of most substantial evidence, quite sufficient to sustain the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship;—quite sufficient to work the deepest conviction in our minds of the truth of His doctrines, and of the divine authority of His precepts. We shall thus find, even amidst the most formidable difficulties, which the unrenewed mind discovers in Christianity, deep sources of the purest enjoyment. We shall thus most certainly and effectually promote our true interests and happiness.—Difficulties may, indeed, force themselves upon our

notice. These may seem to be formidable, perplexing, embarrassing. They may seem to obscure the brightest truths—to weaken the most powerful evidence. They may awaken the most painful doubts, and apprehensions in us, respecting the stability of our religious hopes. We may be ready to join in the message, which John the Baptist sent to Jesus; and with him to demand; “Art thou he, that should come, or do we look for another?” But what if we should say to ourselves—The most obvious facts in the natural world—the very facts, which we daily witness—are encumbered with various difficulties, which we are utterly unable to explain; ought we not then to expect, that the sublime truths of religion would present points of inquiry beyond the reach of the human mind to investigate and comprehend? May not the difficulties, which embarrass us, be owing altogether to the feebleness of our powers—to the limited and narrow range of our thoughts and reflections? And after all, do we not learn from daily observation and experience, that difficulties cannot justly be opposed to evidence? Must we not, on this ground, deny the most obvious occurrences, deny even our own existence? We may not then array the difficulties, by which religious truths seem to be embarrassed against the evidence, by which it is sustained. And what shall we say; do we stop to settle difficulties, before we permit ourselves to enjoy the blessings of Providence, respecting which questions might be asked, that we could not answer? Do we refuse to partake, hungry though we may be, of the “finest wheat,” till we comprehend the processes of vegetation and nutrition? Do we refuse the advantages of thought—the pleasures of friendship and of love, until we have settled every inquiry, which might be raised respecting the nature and operations of our minds? And shall we be madly inconsistent only in religion? Shall we reject the evidence, which clearly and fully supports the character and authority of the very Saviour, of whom we stand in most pressing need, because questions may be asked respecting Him, which we are not wise enough to answer? For the same reason, shall we spurn the victim, who died for us, and whose blood alone can wash away our sins—refuse the offered aid of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to win our way to Heaven—and rise up in rebellion against the government of God, which alone can effectually protect us from our foes, defend our rights, secure our various interests? To humour our pride, and gratify our selfishness, shall we live in disobedience to the commands of Jesus? This were to involve ourselves in the grossest folly. It is our wisdom, for it is our happiness, to lay hold of the blessings of the Gospel;—blessings, which modesty and candor in conducting our religious inquiries, will lead us to hold in just estimation. Let those who will, be held back by difficulties, which grow out of their own ignorance and imbecility, from accepting the offered, needed benefits of gracious Heaven; be ours the happiness of cordially believing in Jesus, as the Saviour of the world. By His agency, did not the blind receive their sight and the lame walk? were not the lepers cleansed, and did not the deaf hear? were not

the dead raised up, and to the poor was not the Gospel preached? Jesus, Master, Heaven forbid, that we should be offended in Thee!

By all the regard you have for your best interests and highest happiness, I exhort you, my hearers, to break through every difficulty, which would hold you back from a cordial confidence in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. Tell me, do ye not need a Saviour, who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities; who can sympathize in your sorrows; upon whom you can look as a faithful and merciful high-priest? Believe in Jesus. Do you not need a Saviour, who can search your inmost souls—forgive your sins—tread down your foes—sustain you in the dying hour—raise you to heaven? Believe in Jesus. You cannot contemplate His character, as set forth in the Bible, without seeing clearly, and feeling deeply, that He is the *very Saviour* your necessities require. Trample, then, on every obstacle which would hold you back from His feet. Do you shiver with fear when you hear eternal Justice, from the top of Sinai, utter the irrevocable decree,—“The soul that sinneth it shall die?” From your inmost soul, do you long to find a victim, by whose blood the authority of the divine law might be maintained, the glory of the divine character preserved, and your crimes washed away from the book of God’s remembrance? “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Hasten to His cross. Break through every impediment, and fasten all your hopes on Him. Do you tremble lest the evil tendencies of your nature, combined with the assaults of temptation, should lead you far away from duty and from peace? Do you distrust your power to break off your guilty habits—“to overcome the world?” Do you long to bear the image of the Son of God? Remember, then, “He is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them who ask, than are parents to give good things to their children.” Cast yourself upon this promised aid of the Holy Ghost. Lay open your bosom to His gracious influences; and even in the “narrow way,” you shall “run and not be weary.” Is your spirit tired of the darkness and storms which settle on this world? Do you see little but vicissitude, confusion, distraction? Look upward, I beseech you. The Lord reigneth. Confide; in the face of general rebellion, confide in His wisdom, power, and goodness, and you shall see Him walking on the tempest, guiding the whirlwind, controlling the thunder-bolt. Would you be assured of the joys of Heaven? Give up your whole heart to the spirit of holy obedience—wait at the feet of Jesus—be clothed with humility—devote your all—your spirit, soul, and body, to the Son of God—and even now may you catch “the beams, and breezes, and blessed visions of Heaven.”

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Go...Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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THE GOSPEL THE ONLY SECURITY FOR EMINENT AND ABIDING NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

JEREMIAH, ix. 23, 24.—*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

At the time this inspired admonition was given, the Jewish nation had become uncommonly wicked. Instead of relying on the favor of Heaven, they confided in their knowledge, wealth, power, and political wisdom. Their prophets warned them of the divine displeasure and of approaching judgments, but these warnings passed unheeded as the idle wind. What, said they, has a nation, so wise and powerful, to fear ? Let the prophets mind their trade, and take care of the world to come, and we will take care of this ; for religion and politics have no sort of connection.

To rebuke such impiety the text was spoken. " Thus saith the LORD." It is no philosopher that speaks ; but God. No doubtful theory is announced ; but eternal truth. No vain experiment is recommended ; but the wisdom which is from above. " Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Cease from your vain confidence in learning, wealth, and power, and put your trust in that knowledge of my character and government, which shall purify the heart and secure my protection and blessing.

The same propensity to confide in man for national prosperity, and to forget God and the influence of his government, has manifested itself in every age. And no nation was ever, by its location, government, and great prosperity, more tempted to do this than ours. Our territory is vast, our soil bountiful, our institutions free, our intellect unshackled, our physical power vigorous, our enterprise untiring, our numbers multiplying beyond example, our fleets and armies are skilful and brave, while our colleges and schools are

multiplying; and our attainments in science and the arts fast coming into honorable competition with the first nations of Europe. Indeed we possess the elements of the most powerful nation that ever lived, with ample room to grow, and nurture to sustain. Our relative condition is also sublimely interesting. We are surrounded by the ruins and the shaking of other nations, who have gloried in themselves and not in God,—whose monitory exhortations come to us across the deep, that we trust not in man, but in the living God. The text inculcates the doctrine,

THAT THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT IS INDISPENSABLE TO EMINENT AND ABIDING NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

In the illustration of this doctrine we propose to consider,

I. The inefficacy of some of the common grounds of confidence; and,

II. The certain efficacy of the Gospel to secure eminent and abiding national prosperity.

1. The cultivation of intellect has been relied on. Theorists have said, that knowledge and virtue are the foundation and security of republican institutions; but they have taken it for granted, that knowledge and virtue are inseparable. Hence, throughout our land, a great enthusiasm for learning has gone forth; and legislators, and philosophers, and poets, have vied with each other in praise of schools and literary institutions. And truly they are means without which no nation can be free and happy. But, for purposes of restraint and reformation, mere knowledge is nugatory. There are no moral qualities in intellect; nor is there in science any moral power to govern or purify the heart—the source of all the evils which afflict humanity, and which hitherto have baffled all human efforts. Those countries and ages which have been most distinguished for science and the fine arts, have also been distinguished for voluptuousness and crime; thus evincing that the era of moral dissolution may tread hard upon that of the highest intellectual culture. This indeed does not prove that knowledge corrupts; but it demonstrates its impotency to purify, amid the powerful temptations which attend the ascent to national greatness.

2. Reason, upon which, from age to age, the hopes of so many have hung, has given equal evidence of its impotency to unite moral purity with national prosperity. It has never been able to develop the character of God, or the precepts and sanctions of his moral government, nor to preserve even the knowledge of a revelation, or repel the invasion of idolatry, and imposture, and superstition. What can reason accomplish, now, towards dispelling the darkness which for ages has rested on three fourths of the human family? It is, compared with the moral illumination of the Gospel, the effort of a rush-light to compete with the orb of day in scattering the darkness which enshrouds the earth. The efforts and failures of reason to elevate nations to permanent prosperity had been protracted through four thousand years, when, "after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

3. Alike impotent have been the efforts of philosophy to reform mankind.

The philosophers did not reform even themselves. "Do you think," says Cicero, "that those precepts of morality had any influence, except in a very few instances, upon the men who speculated, wrote, and disputed concerning them? No: who is there of all the philosophers whose mind and manners were conformed to the dictates of right reason? Who of them ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not merely an occasion of displaying his own ingenuity? On the contrary, many of them have been slaves to the vilest lusts." The boasted illumination of their philosophy extended only to a favored few of the wealthiest in society; while for the mass of mankind it had no instruction, formed no plans, indulged no hopes, expressed no desires.

Socrates, according to Plato, says, "You may resign all hope of reforming the manners of men, unless it please God to send some person to instruct you." And Plato himself says, "Whatever is set right in the present ill state of the world, can be done only by the interposition of God."

The testimony of such men is unanswerable. We are surrounded by the effects of Christianity; but they felt the midnight in which they were enveloped, and the impotency of mere human efforts to restrain the depravity of man. The middle and lower classes of society were out of the question, until the Gospel brought its glad tidings to the poor, and originated institutions for the efficacious instruction of the world.

4. Again, national wealth has been regarded as the perfection of prosperity. But, instead of being able to give perpetuity to the golden harvest, it has, in all ages, been the most active and powerful cause of national corruption and ruin. The power of voluntary self-denial is not equal to the temptation of an all-surrounding abundance; and no instance has yet occurred, in which national voluptuousness has not trod hard upon the footsteps of national opulence, destroying moral principle and patriotism, debasing the mind and enervating the body, and preparing men to become, like the descendants of the Romans, effeminate slaves. All which is done to stimulate agriculture, commerce, and the arts, is, therefore, without some self-preserving moral power, but providing fuel for the fire which is destined to consume us. The greater our prosperity the shorter its duration, and the more tremendous our downfall, unless the moral power of the Gospel shall be exerted to arrest those causes which have destroyed other nations.

5. Nor is military power at all a safer ground of confidence than wealth. It is at best, in this world of wrong and violence, but a necessary evil. An evil, too, of awful magnitude in its influence upon national morality; and an engine which may as easily be applied, and has as often been applied, to overthrow, as to defend the liberties of mankind.

But were the resources of knowledge, wealth, and power, even more efficacious, an hundred fold, than experience permits us to believe, still they could not shield us against the retributions of that government which God administers over nations, according to their deeds. What can the most powerful nations do to avert the just judgments of the Almighty? Where are the nations of antiquity?—Gone—dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. The walls of Babylon—the treasures of Egypt—the might of Alexander—were no defence. Once the Pope could wield a force equal to that of ancient Rome. Did he but stamp his foot, all Europe awoke, and rushed to arms. He held the world in vassalage. He sat as god in the temple of God. But the

arm of his power is now palsied : and, shorn of his locks, he is comparatively weak as another man.

The military despotism of France threatened once the liberties of the world. If ever there was a mighty man who might glory in his might, it was Bonaparte, when he drove upon Russia the most powerful force ever wielded by one man. But Russia, sustained by her armies and her climate, stood, while the stars in their courses fought against the invader.

6. Political wisdom, the boast and confidence of nations, is on many accounts unavailing to secure and perpetuate national prosperity. It aims only at secular results and not at moral purity, and must ever be attended with great uncertainty in regard to the effect of measures on the innumerable multitudes of minds that are to be influenced. So that political science, so called, is often but a series of ingenious conjectures. The younger Pitt formed two gigantic coalitions to check the power of Bonaparte, both of which were dashed, and ended in its augmentation. The dependance of great events on trivial circumstances which no human foresight can perceive, renders, often, the wisest plans abortive : while the agency of God in the government of the world may in a moment baffle and turn to foolishness the best-concerted schemes of man. Haman planned wisely for the destruction of Mordecai ; but the hand of God brought the mischief intended for another upon his own head. The brethren of Joseph planned wisely to prevent the accomplishment of his dreams ; while, in the hand of God, the very things they did to hinder, secured their accomplishment.

The dominion of the passions, also, over reason and judgment, renders human foresight and policy a matter of uncertainty. Wisdom is no certain guarantee against passion. Nothing is more common than for a sudden gust of anger to shipwreck every hope of the most judicious calculation. Those whom God would destroy, he can give up to infatuation :—a state of mind in which passion guides the helm, and swells the sail, and drives furiously to destruction. Nations, like volcanoes, possess within themselves the materials of ruin : and for God to take off his hand, and give them up, is certain destruction. These, however, are dangers incident chiefly to the connection of nations with each other, or to times of revolution and civil commotion. But even in seasons of tranquillity, there are evils in every community, which no human laws or municipal regulations can control. Laws cannot compel benevolent dispositions, or purify motives, or repress selfishness, or ambition, or avarice, or envy, or pride, or voluptuousness. They are restricted to the government of actions—and of these, to such only as can be commanded and enforced, or forbidden and punished—constituting but a small portion of the good or evil on which the prosperity or destruction of social enjoyment depends. And in the event of transgression, such actions only can be punished as are capable of proof. The law has no omniscient eye to detect, no almighty hand to arrest and punish transgression. Nothing but the government of God—its laws—its sanctions—its dispositions—and its universal and infallible administration—is adequate to the emergencies of this sin-destroyed world. The malady is in the heart ; and nothing human can expel, or subdue, or stand before its power. Throw obstructions in its course, and its impatient floods accumulate, and press upon their barriers, till they undermine, or overwhelm, and sweep them away. Bind with green withs or new cords the giant depravity of man, and they are sundered as flax touched by the fire. Try by amuse-

ment to divert the monster from his work of death, and you do but fill the cup of oblivion to all that is good, and raise in the house of mirth the syren song that allures but to destroy. Set in array, as Papal and Pagan lawgivers have done, the terrors of superstition, and, in the despotism which follows, you form a beast of seven heads and ten horns, whose infernal wisdom has amplified all antecedent modes of debasing and tormenting mankind. And if, to expel from the earth this anomaly of mischief, you send out a crusade of atheists and infidels, experience has evinced that their reign of terror so much surpasses other forms of wickedness and modes of torment, as to render popery and a military despotism comparative blessings. God, my hearers, the omniscient, the almighty God, can alone administer an efficacious moral government over nations—and he only by that Gospel which is “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will to men.”

We are now to show,

II. *That the Gospel is able to conduct nations to eminent and abiding prosperity.*

It was devised and bestowed upon mankind for this purpose—containing in its ample provisions the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come: and it is, in all its moral tendencies, eminently adapted to the ends for which it was designed.

It addresses powerfully the most efficient springs of human action—hope and fear—the desire of good and the dread of evil. The rigor of law would exasperate and drive to desperation a world of sinners; while the Gospel—with the sword of justice and the sceptre of mercy—enters the world to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bound. It throws upon the hopes and fears of men an intensity of motive, in the mingled and balanced influence of justice and mercy, severity and kindness, affording the highest moral excitement which can possibly be applied to the human mind. The glories of heaven allure, and the terrors of the Lord alarm. The terms of pardon—filial sorrow for sin and affectionate reliance on Christ—preclude despondency and elevate hope; while all the spirit-stirring truths of the Gospel are secured from oblivion, and made permanent and plain in a written revelation—capable of translation into every language of man, and containing, in its ample provisions, an institution for the religious instruction of mankind, simple, cheap, and efficacious—reconciling the religious education of the world with the avocations of labor, by setting apart one day in seven for that end, and an order of men who shall be exclusively devoted to the work; securing in this way the continuance and repetition of that instruction upon which the moral purity of the world so eminently depends, and by which the Holy Spirit operates to restrain, to convince of sin, and to reconcile an alienated world to God.

The Scriptures confirm the views we have given of the adaptation and power of the Gospel to reclaim and bless mankind. It is described as the power of God and the wisdom of God; as the highest possible exhibition of his goodness—the riches of the goodness of God—the brightness of his glory—as the exhibition of all the power of motive which is possible—rendering, when the Gospel fails, reformation hopeless.

Already has the Gospel given good evidence of its power, and an earnest of its future achievements. No other moral cause has made so great and

so benign an impression upon this dark and miserable world. Commencing in the ministry of a single individual, and sustained by the enterprise of twelve disciples, it urged its silent career, amid flames, and tortures, and death, until, at the close of the third century, it triumphed.

The effect produced upon the laws and institutions of the Roman empire by Christianity is the greatest which was ever effected without violence. Partial as was the spread of Christianity—imperfect as was the knowledge of it—and limited as was its efficacy upon the heart—and transient as was its lustre—so soon eclipsed by superstition and the return of barbarian ignorance, yet, to this day, is the difference great and manifest between the worst portions of Christendom and the total darkness that rests on all the earth beside. The hideous spectacles of Pagan impurity and cruelty have given place to monuments of Christian love. And if this partial, momentary experiment produced such changes, what may not be expected when the religion of the Gospel shall pervade every palace, and cottage, and heart on the globe?

We have another evidence of the life-giving power of the Gospel at the Reformation. Gradually it had been sequestered, until, under the abused name of Christianity, a system of idolatry had been reared up, as impure almost and as fierce and cruel as Paganism itself. But no sooner did the Bible reappear, in the translations made and scattered by the reformers, and the system of evangelical instruction, so long suspended, go into operation, than half Europe burst her chains, and experienced a moral resurrection.

Other instances are now multiplying upon us of the civilizing and purifying power of the Gospel, among heathen nations, and those too the most debased. In South Africa, among the Hotentots, the purities and charities of civilized life are rising up under evangelical culture. At Sierra Leone, also, orderly, decent, and happy settlements are formed, and churches too are established, giving evidence of elevated piety—composed of beings rescued a few years since from the chains, and darkness, and moral corruption of slave-ships.

The change at the Sandwich Islands, also, is as unquestionable as it is wonderful and joyful. A nation has been born in a day. A reverse of secular and moral condition has been achieved, greater, and more entire and benign, on the whole population, than was ever before witnessed on earth in so short a time.

But we need not go abroad for monuments of the benign influence of the Gospel upon the temporal condition of man. Our pilgrim fathers came hither that they might enjoy religious liberty, and make a fair experiment of what the Gospel could do to bless mankind. And the religious, civil, and social prosperity of New England is the result. The poor we have ever with us—but among them who are the *virtuous* poor? Precisely those who venerate the Sabbath, and attend stately upon the worship of God. While the *vicious* poor will be found, among those whose religious education has been neglected, and upon whom the Bible, and the Sabbath, and the Gospel have exerted little influence: and if you traverse the whole land, those portions most distinguished for Bibles and a devout attention upon Gospel ordinances, will be found proportionably distinguished by whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report.

The reforming influence of the Gospel, as developed in Sabbath Schools, also gives triumphant testimony to its power. The Recorder of London stated, at a public meeting, that of two thousand children educated in Sao-

bath Schools, only seven who had been in them over fourteen days had ever been brought before him for crime ; and that too among a class of citizens peculiarly degraded.

These fruits of the Bible are in perfect accordance with its predictions. I need not repeat them at large. They are many and express. It is predicted that God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil spread over all nations—that his knowledge shall cover the earth as the waters the sea—that all shall know him from the greatest to the least—and the people be all righteous—that wars shall cease—that benevolence shall supplant selfishness and ferocity—and that the earth, exuberant in its supplies, shall nevertheless be filled with purity and joy.

I have only to add, that all other systems of moral influence depend simply upon their own unaided strength ; while the Gospel is attended by the special presence of God and the power of his Holy Spirit—giving to it an efficacy infinitely beyond that of simple argument or eloquence. Thus attended, the Gospel wrought its wonders of mercy on the day of Pentecost, and during the first ages of Christianity. Thus attended, it has, in these latter days and these ends of the earth, often, in the course of a few weeks or months, changed the entire aspect of a neighborhood or town—introducing a moral elevation that gladdens angels. And thus attended, this same Gospel is capable of breaking every chain of oppression, and renovating a ruined world. Who then, that loves his country—that loves mankind—would, by example or otherwise, hinder the progress of this Gospel ? and not rejoice rather in every effort made for extending its blessed influence ?

SERMON LV.

PROPRIETY AND IMPORTANCE OF EFFORTS TO EVANGELIZE THE NATION.

JEREMIAH, ix. 23, 24.

It, as has been shown in the preceding discourse, the Gospel only is able to conduct nations to abiding prosperity,—then,

NOTHING IS TO BE FEARED, BUT MUCH IS TO BE HOPED FOR, FROM THE EFFORTS OF PATRIOTS AND CHRISTIANS TO EVANGELIZE THE NATION.

Infidels and profligate men affect great trepidation, lest the efforts made to spread the Gospel should lead to combinations dangerous to our liberties, and rear up another hierarchy, and bring back priestcraft and the dark ages. But do they *really believe* any such thing ? Do they fear any such thing ? Do they not *know*, that wherever the Gospel and its institutions have been most revered, men have been most intelligent, most free from superstition, and most incapable of ecclesiastical domination ? Do they not *know*, that superstition and priestcraft have in all climes and ages increased, just in proportion as the moral energy of the Gospel has declined ? It is the testimony of history, that principles of civil and religious liberty have always accompanied evangelical religion, and made their most desperate resistance to arbitrary power and achieved their most glorious victories under its auspices. And it is equally true, that there never was a religion

but that of the Gospel, which did not darken and debase the mind, and lend its influence to despotism and to a corrupt and abominable priesthood.

The ascendancy of that terrible form of *nominal* Christianity, which arose in the dark ages, and whose persecutions have kept the heavens gleaming with their fires, and the earth flowing with blood, was the result of a long declension of evangelical light, and has held, and still holds, indissoluble alliance with ignorance of the pure Gospel, and passive obedience to despotic power.

But are those among us, who affect so much apprehension of danger from clerical influence, aware of the invidious imputation which they thus cast upon their countrymen? Are they as ignorant as the people of the dark ages? Do they need conservators to prevent their giving up their money, and their civil and religious rights, into the hands of the clergy? Are our citizens so far gone, that they have no guardians between them and destruction, but the volunteer aid of those keen-sighted, kind-hearted gentlemen, who have discovered that the Bible is a cunningly devised fable, and that after death it shall be as well with the wicked as with the righteous? What possible danger to liberty can arise from clerical influence, exerted by enlightened men upon a virtuous community? There is an influence inseparable from talent, piety, and fidelity in the pastoral office, which none but wicked men fear, and which can never be prevented, but by such general ignorance and profligacy as will render good men odious, and ruin the nation. A new kind of conspiracy, indeed, against civil liberty must that be, which proposes, by the dissemination of Bibles, and the preaching of the Gospel, to enslave the country!—The very means by which the Reformers emancipated half Europe, and by which to this day all the civil liberty which exists in the world has been preserved! An unparalleled deliverance, too, from priestcraft and popery must that be, which shall be achieved by undermining the public confidence in evangelical ministers, stopping the circulation of Bibles and tracts, and abolishing missionary societies and sabbath schools!—thus leaving the land in darkness, and open to the invasion of Papal missionaries, and the influence of those ample revenues which “his Holiness” so unsparingly consecrates to the establishment of his dominion in North America.*

Are those enemies of revelation who clamour so loudly against the means which achieved the reformation, and which alone can prevent the spread of popery in our country, in the pay of his Holiness? Has the secret service-money reached its destination, and does the mystery of iniquity already begin to work? We make no pretensions to prophecy, and we do not need that gift to foresee, that if Popery shall ever gain in this land an ascendancy dangerous to our liberties, it will be accomplished only through the aid of infidels, and the virulent haters of evangelical religion, and those multitudes to whom evangelical instruction is not extended.

Already has the loud tone of execration against popery been turned from “his Holiness” and his American emissaries, to that class of Protestants who in Europe broke down his dominion, and in this country are raising the only effectual barriers against his usurpation.

Is it darkness, then, or is it light, which they so much fear, who cry out against charities which are destined to evangelize the nation and the world?

* It is understood that “his Holiness” has sent over at least *twenty-seven* Missionaries, and *one hundred thousand* dollars to aid in this good work the past year.

Have *they* any objection to the dark ages who oppose the propagation of that Gospel—the extinction of which produced them, and the restoration of which has kindled the only light and restored the only civil and religious liberty which now cheers the world? Do not the infidel and profligate *know*, that the general prevalence of the Gospel would create an atmosphere of light and purity that would pour shame on the *wicked*? And is not *this* the *real* ground of their alarm?

But our countrymen are too intelligent to be the dupes of a feigned alarm. They understand the motives of those who make the outcry—in many instances men who for a mess of pottage would sell their country—men who, should a tyrant ever rule the nation, will, by their bad example, prepare the way, and be the first to hail the usurper, and to become the ministers of his despotism. For, those who blush not to practise treason against the government of God—who acknowledge the obligation of Divine institutions only to insult Heaven and a Christian community by violating them, have no conscience and no patriotism, and can give no security that they would not, in times of temptation, sell their country.

But will the future Cæsar of our country, should one arise, be able, think you, to call to his standard the patriotic band, who, amid obloquy and self-denial, are laboring to transmit to future millions our colleges and schools, and sabbaths and sanctuaries? Were such means and such men ever employed to subvert the liberties of a nation? Preposterous! The Gospel, instead of degrading, is the only power which elevates the people above the influence of demagogues, and diffuses intelligence, independence, and a vigorous morality among the middle classes in society. It is the only power which detects imposture, supplants idolatry, and pours a hated day-light on superstition and the works of darkness. It is the only power which can keep down the plethora of a luxuriant prosperity, and restrain the paroxysms of mad ambition.

As to the outcry, then, if sincere, of a national religion, to be reared by clerical intrigue and pecuniary influence, it is the most chimerical and laughable imagination that ever danced in the brain of a lunatic. The permanent funds held by charitable institutions are but a drop of the bucket, compared with those which are allowed to be held by companies associated for secular purposes, and their annual accounts, rendered to the public, of receipts and expenditures, are more minute, and such as more entirely preclude the possibility of perversion, than those rendered by any secular institutions in the land. No man who pays taxes for the support of government, has any thing like the same evidence that the public income is not perverted. And it is this open, honest course, which satisfies a virtuous community, whose charities will no longer be continued than this confidence in their wise appropriation is sustained.

The Christian population of the United States is divided chiefly between four or five large denominations; each sustained and protected by its own religious Magazines, Newspapers, Theological Seminaries, Education and Missionary Societies, and Sabbath Schools—neither of which could supplant the others, or be supplanted, without a moral miracle. Nor could they be amalgamated into one denomination for ambitious purposes, without a still greater miracle. And though, in regard to objects in which all Christians and all patriots are agreed, it may be amiable, and very proper, that these denominations should cheerfully unite and co-operate, yet their amalgamation into one denomination, even for religious purposes,

is without effect ; parents are without natural affection ; children are disobedient and dissolute ; and the family a scene of turmoil and wretchedness.

In those countries where Christianity is but a name, and the Sabbath a holiday, assassination and murder are committed with terrific frequency. And in our own land, these crimes are most frequent where the sacredness of the Sabbath is most violated, and where intemperance and profaneness legislate, instead of a public sentiment, formed by the benevolence of the Gospel. Even that command of the decalogue which organizes the family, and watches over domestic purity, and perpetuates all the sweet charities which render life a blessing, maintains its powers only by the energy of the fourth command. And the security of property and the efficacy of oaths correspond entirely with the universal dominion, or partial efficacy, which the Sabbath gives to the moral government of God.

These are the considerations which have awakened the solicitude of the nation, and called forth petitions to the government from all parts of the Union for a *repeal of all legislative requirement or sanction of the violation of this Holy Day*. For, however seemingly great the convenience or profit of a Sabbath mail may be, it is purchased at the expense of moral principle—the life-blood of the nation.

The importunity is now the greater, because it is fully evident, that no successful effort can be made to resist the floods of worldliness and pleasure which are rolling over the Sabbath, while they are sustained and led on by the omnipresent example of government—under the high sanction and command of *national law*. The numbers whom the carrying and opening of the mail diverts directly from the influence of the Sanctuary, and the greater numbers of those who accompany them, or minister to their necessities, together with the innumerable multitudes, especially in large towns, whose worldly interests and cares and labors are continued by the news and letters poured in upon the Sabbath, must, when reckoned up, be seen to subtract, in an alarming degree, from those energies of the divine government which depend on the weekly ministrations of truth. But if to these we add all who are, perhaps, first tempted to travel in steam-boats and stages, by the *national example* ; and all who, when the flood-gates are thus open, pour out for business or pleasure, on foot, on horseback, in chaises, coaches, waggons and canal-boats ; who that reflects, can but tremble for the consequences ? Who does not see that the numbers employed in undermining our holiest institutions, are becoming greater than those employed for their defence ?

Were it not for this example of the government, a public sentiment might be formed, which would silently and powerfully correct the evil, and preserve to the nation the benign influence of the Sabbath. But with the strong tide of governmental influence setting down upon us, it will be certainly difficult, if not impossible, to prevent a general prostration of the Sacred Day :—at least as to any efficacious purposes of national instruction and morality. For its influence upon public morals can be salutary, only so far as it acts through the medium of evangelical instruction.

The question, therefore, whether the government will or will not continue to require its eight thousand Post-Masters, and several thousand other agents to violate the Lord's Day, is perhaps the most important that ever was, or ever will be submitted for national consideration. Prospectively, it is the question of the preservation or abolition of the Sabbath, and every petitioner,

and legislator, and remonstrant, should make up his mind on the simple question, SHALL WE ABOLISH, OR NOT ABOLISH, THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH ?

With but twelve millions of people, and no hindrance on the part of government, it might perhaps be practicable to form a public sentiment that would set bounds to the encroachments on the Sabbath, but every year and hour the breach becomes wider, and should the flood roll on, encouraged by government, till, within the present century, our numbers shall amount to EIGHTY MILLIONS—more and more tempted, and more and more by habit and the course of business necessitated, as they will feel, to violate the Sabbath—whose voice will then be able to electrify the nation ? whose hand can stop the rolling of such a flood ? or whose wisdom can counteract its awful desolations ?

A spectacle, then, we now witness, such as the sun never before shone upon. A Christian people petitioning their government to repeal a statute which enjoins upon many thousands of our citizens a direct violation of the Holy Sabbath, and which, by the high authority of its example, encourages many thousands more to similar violations ; and that government hesitating, whether to grant or reject these petitions !

It does not belong to the ministry, as such, to legislate. But it does belong to our profession, as a class of men appointed of Heaven for that very purpose, to lift up our voice, in respectful but earnest expostulation and argument, against every form of national transgression. And could I approach the representatives of the freest nation upon earth, and possessing ample means of becoming the greatest and the happiest, I would beseech them to consider, whether it was ever possible for a people to delegate to its representatives the power to appropriate the Sabbath to a secular use ? Has an individual a right to secularize the Sabbath for his own convenience or profit ? The laws of God and man forbid him. How then can the people delegate to Congress a right which no one possesses in his own person ?

The Sabbath was indeed made for man ; but not to add to the curse which doomed him, six days in seven, to eat bread in the sweat of his face ; but to alleviate its pressure, and to bring around him the means by which God in his mercy may allay the curse, and bring him out of bondage into glorious liberty.

But were it possible for a people to delegate to their government the right to secularize the Sabbath, I would still ask, whether the generation who fought the battles of our Independence and framed our Constitution, did in fact delegate the power to appropriate the Sabbath to purposes of national gain ? They who recognised the over-ruling providence of God, and national accountability, and, beyond any other people on earth, venerated the holy Sabbath—they who, in their distress, so often cried unto the God of armies, and for victory sent up such heart-felt thanksgivings—they, surely, while the tears of distress and of joy were yet wet upon their cheeks, could not, *did not*, in their national compact, authorize the violation of the Sabbath. A clause authorising what is now done, could not have passed the Convention ; and if it had, would, at that day, have been rejected unanimously by the States. Besides, rights not expressly delegated to Congress are reserved to the States. But the Constitution not only gives to Congress no power to divert the Sabbath to secular uses, but the laws of nearly every State in the Union expressly prohibit to its citizens any such appropriation of the Sabbath. How then can Congress authorise by law encroachments on the Sabbath, without invading directly the reserved rights of the States ? Cases of national, as of in-

dividual necessity, may occur, but they are plain and exempt cases when they exist, and can never justify laws requiring a habitual violation of the Sabbath.

But were it a question not of morality, or of national right, but of expediency—the *impolicy* of encroaching upon the religious veneration and careful observance of the Sabbath, would be a decisive reason for regarding the cry of patriots and Christians, resounding in the ear of government. I am aware that the convenience and gain are by some supposed to be so great as to make the transportation and opening of the mail on the Sabbath a work of necessity. But how can that be a work of necessity, which in London, the commercial emporium of the world, is not done? In that great city, the post-office is not opened on the Sabbath, and no mail leaves it.—Are our citizens in such straitened circumstances as to make it *necessary* to attend to business here one day in seven more than in London?

There are multitudes in our cities, God grant their number may increase, who do not call for their letters on the Sabbath. Do they fail in business? or do they fall behind their commercial competitors who include the Sabbath in their day of secular care? The plea of necessity is utterly unfounded;—the result of that impatient worldliness which needs to be checked;—which it was the merciful design of the Sabbath to suspend; and which, if it be not suspended, will drown the nation in perdition.

The plea of necessity can never hold, till the nation is threatened with poverty;—certainly not while it is in a condition of unparalleled affluence. It is over-abundance which constitutes the temptation to violate the Sabbath—an argument which, if valid, would license every thriving mechanic and farmer to do the same, as a matter of personal convenience, and necessity. But already over-prosperity is our greatest danger, unless we can balance its corrupting tendencies by moral power. To subtract, therefore, from the moral influence of the Sabbath, for the purpose of adding to our abundance, is like subtracting the life-blood from one who is dying of debility, to be forced into the veins of another who is dying of inflammation. All our Sabbath-day earnings, then, were they real, would but increase our malady, and at the same time diminish the force of our only remedy.

But long since has the point been settled that nothing is gained by adding the seventh to the six days of labor. Mind and body have their limits of care and toil; and God, who made them, well knows what degree of relaxation is consistent with their most productive exercise, and has given his decision in the appropriation of six days to labor and one for rest; and none have been able with impunity to disregard this appointment. The appointment, in France, of nine, instead of six days for labor, was found to be injurious to health and vigorous enterprise. And those best acquainted with the animal powers, admit, that whatever immediate gain may be attained by unintermitted toil, is cut off, and more than balanced by the waning powers and shortened date of animal activity. And the same laws of nature, with irresistible power, will bring the man prematurely to the dust, who disregards Heaven's merciful appointment of a seventh day rest. So far then as national prosperity depends on mental and muscular vigor in man, and the unwasted powers of animal life, six days produce a greater amount of income than seven,—and this accompanied with cheering rest, higher health, social enjoyment, religious privileges, peace of conscience, and hopes of heaven.

But even were Sabbath day labor as productive as some suppose, it is still far more than balanced by the extra taxation which vice and irreligion never

fail to impose. Before we exult, therefore, in our gain, let us estimate the additional expense of sickness and premature mortality, of quarrels and lawsuits produced by irreligion, of the idleness, improvidence, and wasteful prodigality which attend national dissoluteness, and how then will the balance stand? All these sacrilegious earnings will be consumed, besides double their amount of honest gain. In no way can the nation be impoverished so certainly, as by that extended annihilation of moral principle, which cannot fail to keep pace with the profanation of the Sabbath.

I have heard, in this land of freedom, the movements of the nation to rescue the Sabbath ascribed to priestcraft! But is it such a crime to be a minister of Christ, as creates presumptive evidence of guile, when he performs a professional duty? Who is bound to watch and sound the alarm, if not the watchmen of Zion? Or is the Sabbath such a remnant of papal superstition, that he must needs be an ambitious hypocrite, who excites his countrymen to care for and preserve it? Is religion high-treason? Are ministers disfranchised? Are we not citizens, and blessed with equal rights? And have we not families upon whose neck must come the yoke of that despotism, which vice and irreligion never fail to create? But it is not ministers alone that have awakened the solicitude which pervades the nation, and which extends and deepens, every month, and day, and hour. This is an intelligent nation, and to some extent a religious nation; and thousands of Christian patriots appreciate the civil blessings of the Sabbath, and perceive the certain destruction of our republican institutions which must follow its extended and general profanation. It is the sober, reflecting, judicious, pious part of the nation, that sees and thinks, and feels and petitions.

But it is said, that Congress have no right to legislate for religion. It is true, and let God be praised that there is at length one nation under heaven, one mighty nation, where church and state are not united, and where reason and conscience are free. But the petitions are, not that Congress will do any thing *for* religion, but, simply, that by legislation they will do nothing *against* religion—*simply that they will not, with the people's money, hire their twenty-six thousand Mail-carriers, Post-masters and assistants, to unite with the wicked in prostrating the holy Sabbath!* We ask for no union of church and state: but, simply, that the moral influence of the Sabbath may not be thus bartered away for secular gain.

But again, it is said, that no man is obliged to imitate the example of those who violate the Sabbath, and why should not those who choose to keep it mind their own concerns, and let their neighbors alone? We might, if it were benevolent to see our neighbors perish without an effort to save them, and if the conduct of our neighbors affected in no respect our civil and religious rights, by impairing the restraining influence of the government of God. But every Sabbath-breaker, in addition to the ruin he brings on himself, is impairing the moral principle of the community in which I live, and the obligation of an oath; and of course impairs the security of my life, and property, and character, and multiplies temptation around my family—increasing the difficulties of a virtuous education, and the chances of destruction to my children; and by augmenting the power of licentiousness, and impairing that of moral principle, he is preparing to rob my children of the birth-right of liberty, and to bring upon them the yoke of a grievous bondage;—and is all this nothing to me?

Besides, the act of the government is to a certain extent my own act : my suffrage, and the taxes I pay, all go in support of a national act of Sabbath-day violation. And why shall my rights of conscience be thus sported with, for purposes of secular convenience or gain, to that small portion of the nation, who think that they are benefited by a Sabbath mail ?

It is, however, more than intimated that the petitioners for the preservation of the Sabbath, are influenced by superstitious scruples of conscience, unworthy the consideration of the enlightened and liberal-minded legislators of a great nation. Has religion, then, become foolishness, and conscience a thing to be despised, and exiled from the Republic ? Are the Sabbath and the fear of the Lord remnants of *gross superstition* ? Are the men who have too much conscience to encroach on sacred time, to be of necessity excluded from an important trust, as they must be if Sabbath mails are continued ? Must the commercial interests of the nation be intrusted to those who can eulogize, and still, with pliant conscience, systematically profane the Sabbath, from motives of personal gain ? Once it was, that a want of the fear of God, in courts, occasioned the predominance of temptation, and the multiplication of crimes ; but this it seems is an era of peculiar light, in which conscientious scruples are to be regarded as despicable !

But even could we for a season prosper without the Sabbath, is it possible to shake off our allegiance to God, or to evade the retributions of his righteous providence ? Who wields the orb of day ? Who guides the seasons ? Who sends adversity, and measures out prosperity ? Have we so soon forgotten the weakness of our infancy, and our cries to God, when men rose up against us ? Have we reached an eminence from which God cannot thrust us down ? Can we dispense with his protection, and set at naught his institutions, and run successfully the race of an irreligious prosperity ? Be not deceived. What fleets and armies could not do, the hand of suicide may accomplish, emancipated from divine restraint. Proud and fearless of Heaven as we may be, in one hour our destruction may come. The decree is universal—" *The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee, shall perish.*" And God has not departed from the helm of universal government, or put beyond his power the instruments of punishment. In our country's bosom lie the materials of ruin, which wait only the divine permission to burst forth in terrific eruption, scattering far and wide the fragments of our greatness.

Give up the Sabbath—blot out that orb of day—suspend its blessed attractions—and the reign of chaos and old night would return. The waves of our unquiet sea, high as our mountains, would roll and dash, from west to east, and east to west, from south to north, and north to south, shipwrecking the hopes of patriots and the world.

Who, then, is the patriot that would thrust out our ship from her peaceful moorings, in a starless night, upon such an ocean of storms, without rudder, or anchor, or compass, or chart ? The elements around us may remain, and our giant rivers and mountains. Our miserable descendants, also, may multiply, and vegetate, and rot in moral darkness and putrefaction. But the American character, and our glorious institutions, will go down into the same grave that entombs the Sabbath ; and our epitaph will stand forth a warning to the world—**THUS HENOTE THE NATION THAT DESPISED THE LORD, AND GLORIED IN WISDOM, WEALTH, AND POWER.**

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LVII.

BY EBENEZER PORTER, D.D.

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THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

Exodus, iii. 14.—*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.*

THOUGH Moses was born to be Israel's deliverer, yet no intimation of the divine purpose was given him till he was eighty years of age. Then, while tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, upon the borders of Horeb, he was called from his humble employment of leading sheep, to be the leader of God's chosen people. The manner of this call was suited to the magnitude of the occasion. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush." From this bush, Moses heard a voice calling him by name, and commanding him to put his shoes from off his feet, as a token that the spot where he stood was consecrated by this vision of Jehovah. Filled with astonishment and awe, at the display of glory so refulgent, Moses hid his face, while God proceeded to invest him with a sacred commission. "Come now, I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

While the proud and ignorant grasp at preferment, and deem themselves competent to the highest undertakings, real worth is self-diffident. The wise man shrinks from the perplexities and perils of public life, while he sees "the tallest pines most beaten by the tempest, and the loftiest mountains oftenest smitten by the thunder." Three times did Moses excuse himself from obeying the heavenly call. Though the fittest man on earth, for the service assigned him; eminent for learning, experience, faith, and holy valor; yet he pleaded, "who am I?" If such a humbling message is to be carried to the monarch of Egypt, why should a shepherd of Midian be selected as the messenger? He pleaded the unbelief of his brethren: "They will not hearken to my voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." He pleaded his own personal defects: "I am not eloquent, but am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

Though the firmest courage might well have shrunk from an undertaking so arduous as that to which Moses was called, especially had it not been attended with explicit assurance of divine aid, yet the prospect of personal sufferings involved in the case, doubtless had an undue influence on the good man's feelings. It was, however, a dictate of wisdom, that he should ask

for plain and positive instructions, in the fulfilment of a miraculous commission, where the best human powers must prove altogether inadequate; and in compliance with such a request, God gave that sublime description of his own incomprehensible being, which I have chosen for a text. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name?—what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel; I AM hath sent me unto you." 'There is a majestic simplicity in this language, that sinks into contempt the pomp and splendor of titles, in which the littleness of worldly magnificence is often arrayed.'

"I AM THAT I AM:" I exist independently and immutably. In this expression, all the divine perfections are, perhaps, in some sense comprehended. But our attention will now be limited to the doctrine, as being especially taught in the text, that *Jehovah is unchangeable*.

The proof of this doctrine will be exhibited briefly, as deduced from two sources of argument. That God is unchangeable, appears,

First; From what we know of his *other* attributes.

The light of reason is competent to teach us, that there is a self-existent being. To suppose that there ever was a period when no such being existed, is absurd. It implies that there was a period when there was *absolutely nothing*; no agent in the universe; no cause to act, and produce effects: and this amounts to the supposition that there is no such thing as positive existence *now*. They must be verily fools, and without excuse, who, against the evidence of their own senses and understanding, say "there is no God." The smallest effect of divine power, as really as the greatest; the insect that we tread upon, no less than the globe we inhabit; the atom that floats in the sunbeam, no less than the sun itself, constrain us to acknowledge an intelligent, uncreated first cause. The train of argument, in this case, is plain to the intellect of a child.

Without entering at all into the controverted question, to what extent the light of reason is adequate to teach the character of God, it is enough for our present purpose, that his character is fully taught in the Bible. We are assured, for example, that he is infinite in *goodness*, infinite in *knowledge*, infinite in *power*. The simple inquiry before us is, Are these attributes subject to change?

Now change in any being implies increase, or diminution, or entire removal of certain properties. To suppose any attribute of God to *cease* entirely, is to suppose that he ceases to be God. Change, then, if it occur at all, must imply either *increase* or *diminution* of his perfections. On this principle, it is easy to see, that the least change, in the degree of his *power*, for example, must make him more than almighty, or less than almighty; the least change in his *knowledge* must make him more than omniscient, or less than omniscient; in other words, the least change in a perfect and infinite being is inconceivable.

Secondly; That Jehovah is unchangeable, is proved from explicit and repeated declarations of the Bible. A few plain passages, in which this doctrine is affirmed, will be sufficient. In predicting the enlargement and glory of the church, under the reign of Messiah, according to ancient promise, God declares, by the prophet Malachi; "I am the Lord, I *change not*." Paul, alluding to the same attribute, as the guarantee of the divine covenant with believers, addresses Titus, his own son, after the common faith, "in hope of eternal life, which God, who *cannot lie*, promised before the world began." James concurs in the same testimony, when he affirms; "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*." This appellation, Father of lights, has doubtless a spiritual import: but if the passage alludes, as it probably does, to the changes of the heavenly luminaries, the language is full of energy and beauty, as well as truth. We witness the varying aspects and revolutions of the orbs that roll above us, shining from evening to evening in the same firmament, but never twice exactly in the same place: But with the FATHER of lights, the CREATOR of these changing planets, there is not so much as the least shadow or resemblance of change. The devout psalmist, speaking of the eternal duration of God, contrasted with the mutability of created things, says; "Thou art the *same*, and thy years shall not fail." And the apostle to the Hebrews, in the most explicit terms, repeats the sentiment, "Who is the *same*, yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The direct proof from the Bible, that Jehovah is unchangeable, might be greatly extended, but I trust it is already sufficient. The *inferences* resulting from the truth thus established, are so important as to demand the remaining time that can be allotted to this discourse.

1. All conceptions of God, which apply *time* and *succession* to his existence, are erroneous. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He is no *older* than he was from eternity. Age is a relative term: it implies *beginning*; but God is *eternal*. It implies *change*; but God is *unchangeable*. Time is the measure of *created* existence; but God is *uncreated*.

The manner in which we think, and even exist, renders it difficult for us to conceive of God, without applying to him our measure of time and succession. For this reason, we are liable to mistake in our conceptions of his knowledge, by attaching to it our customary associations of present, past, and future. We may grow wiser by experience or study: our knowledge is progressive; we learn one thing, and then proceed, step by step, to acquire the knowledge of other things. This holds true, even in the highest attainments of what is properly called human science. Hence, the diversity of views which we have of the same thing, at different times, results from the *imperfection* of our knowledge. Change of opinion implies liability to mistake. *Increase* of knowledge implies *past* ignorance; *decrease* of knowledge implies *present* ignorance. But neither of these can be supposed applicable to Him whose "understanding is infinite." When we speak of his *foreknowledge*,

therefore, we must not imagine that his certainty of one event is prior in time to that of another ; or that He comes to the knowledge of any thing, as we do, by deduction and inference. In the proper use of language, all we can mean by his foreknowledge is, that events which come to pass in *time*, were known to God from eternity. So that, to Him, nothing which occurs is unexpected, nothing is new.

2. God has no *new purposes*. This follows, by unquestionable inference, from his immutability. Whatever was his purpose from eternity is his purpose now : and whatever is his purpose now, was his purpose from eternity. Men change their determinations, from instability of mind ; from depravity of heart ; from want of foresight to guard against unexpected occurrences ; from want of power to accomplish what they designed ; or from regard to the power or opinion of others. But what can change the purpose of God ? Not instability of design, "for He is in one mind, and who can turn Him ?" Not want of power, for He is omnipotent : not want of foresight, for He is omniscient : not the opinion of any other being, "for who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counsellor ?" If it is admitted then, that God has *present* purposes, it must be admitted that he has *eternal* purposes. But God has present purposes. If any one doubts this, the proof is at hand. The "determination of God," "his counsel," "his will," "his purpose," are phrases which, as every reader of the Bible knows, occur almost constantly in the sacred pages. What language could be more explicit than the following ?—"For every *purpose* of the Lord shall stand." "Who hath called us according to His own *purpose* and grace." "According to the *purpose* of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." This point, besides, is too evident to require elaborate proof. Did God create the universe ? Does he uphold it, and govern it ? Can any man persuade himself, that all this is done *without design* ? Do the works of creation around us, do our own bodies and minds, bear no marks of intelligence—of *purpose* in the Creator ? No man can suppose this, without denying the evidence of his own senses, and degrading the infinite God below His rational offspring : because His rational offspring do not act without purpose.

Two things then are certain : first, that God is *unchangeable* : secondly, that God has *purposes*. The inference is perfectly conclusive, that these purposes are *eternal*. This argument cannot be evaded. It has the clearness of demonstration.

Whatever difficulty may be thought to attend the doctrine of divine purposes, it lies equally in the way of all who believe the Bible : nay, it lies as much in the way of the philosophical deist, as of the believer in revelation. Deists of good sense acknowledge this : they know that this doctrine is inseparable from the existence of an intelligent God ; and that there is no getting over it, or getting round it, without plunging into the abyss of atheism.

And after all, what reasonable objection can be made to this doctrine ? Is God perfect ? Is He infinitely and immutably perfect ? And is He still unfit to frame a plan of government for a world which He has made ? Who

then is fit to do it? Who *can* do it? Or shall there be *no* plan, and every thing be left to lawless contingency! Shall these heavens cease to declare the glory of God, and this firmament to show his handy work? Shall the suns and systems of this fair universe cease to roll and shine? or wheel their circuits through the mazes of an interminable chaos? Or shall the *minds*, that God has made, as the brighter image of His own intelligence and immortality, be alone exempt from the control of their Creator? Shall He have power to "turn the rivers of water," and none to "turn the hearts of kings?"—power to still the "noise of the seas," and none to still "the tumult of the people?"—power to make plagues and earthquakes subservient to His purposes, and none to "make the wrath of man to praise him?"

To exempt the hearts and actions of men from the dominion of the infinite mind, is to consign this world to sin, and darkness, and wo, without remedy. If this world were but one hour old, who would be afraid to trust its management in the hands of Him that made it? To whose hands could it be so safely committed? Why then should we discard, or reluctantly admit the doctrine of Jehovah's eternal purposes? Let us rather shout with angels, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

And let it not be posterously and presumptuously said, that the divine purposes make men mere machines. Every man is conscious that he is free. He knows, by a direct appeal to his own bosom, that his liberty is not destroyed, nor impaired, by the purposes of God; and it involves a strange mystery, indeed, to affirm that the unchanging determination of Heaven that all men shall be free agents, subverts their freedom.

3. The certainty of final salvation to true believers is a reasonable doctrine, grounded on the immutable truth of God, as implied in the promises of the new covenant. These promises of the unchanging God must be fulfilled. Every real saint, therefore, will certainly be upheld, I do not say in constant obedience, but so upheld in faith and holiness, as to be saved.

Is this doctrine denied, because it is supposed to interfere with moral agency? Cannot the moral liberty of the saint be secured, without putting at everlasting hazard his soul and his salvation? Ask the humble Christian; when he prays for upholding grace, does he feel that he is asking God to take away his freedom? He feels no such difficulty.

Look now at the dreadful result to which this objection leads. If there are no promises of unfailing support to the believer, then any individual saint is liable to become a reprobate, and perish. If one is thus liable, so is another; so is a third; so is the whole number of the faithful. What then becomes of the precious promises made by our Saviour? On the above supposition, there is no security that he will be with his ministers, or that he will *have* ministers, to the end of the world. There is no security that he will have a *church* at any future period. Nay, there is no security that another child of Adam will ever be saved. Nor does the difficulty stop here: if saints on earth, in order to be free, must be liable to fall away and perish: for the same reason, there can be no such thing as confirmed holiness and happiness, in

heaven. Let the validity of this objection be admitted there, and what dismay must it spread through that world of light! Who could say that Paul will not lose his crown, and drop from his shining station; and Gabriel suspend his notes of praise, to become a rebel and a reprobate; and the defection spread around the throne of God, till not a saint or seraph is left to strike the song of Moses and the Lamb! Admit the sentiment, that God cannot consistently make promises of upholding grace to his people, or that it is possible for Him or His promises to change, and the covenant of grace loses all its stability; you turn the charter of the church into a blank; you spoil the Christian's Bible; you take away his rock, and set him on a wave; you leave him no solid foundation for either faith, joy, or hope.

4. When God is said to *repent*, it implies no *change in His character or purposes*. As the parent accommodates his language to the capacity of his child, so God, in condescension to human weakness, speaks of himself in terms adapted to our conceptions. Hence we read of his arm, his hand, his eye. So when he changes his dealings, it is said that he *repents*, because, in *men*, a change of *conduct* usually proceeds from a change of *purpose*. The Bible is not a system of metaphysics: it is a plain book, designed to teach the sublime truths of religion, in language most familiar to the understandings of men. Hence, when we are told that God *repents*, it implies no mutability, no defect of goodness or wisdom, no mistake or disappointment; it merely implies that he *varies* his dispensations, according to the character of moral agents; or in other words, that he changes his conduct towards changing creatures.

5. The immutability of God is no discouragement to prayer, but the best ground of encouragement. The inference has been a thousand times drawn, that it must be vain for us to pray, because our petitions can produce no change in God. This inference is as repugnant to sound reasoning, as it is to the precepts of the Bible, and the spirit of piety. If Jehovah were fickle, like earthly monarchs, then, indeed, it would be vain to pray. No one could ever know with what services he would be pleased, or on what terms his favor might be obtained. You do not trust in a fickle *man*; and how could you trust in a fickle *God*? But as the case is, there can be no uncertainty. Eternal truth is pledged, that the humble, contrite, praying soul shall be blessed; and that they who cast off fear, and restrain prayer, shall be destroyed. Can stronger motives to duty be offered? The answer of prayer implies no change in the mind of God. Still a change of moral temper in *us*, may prepare the way for a change in his *treatment* of us. Such a change in us, every prayer, offered in the spirit of the Gospel, supposes: and, therefore, such a prayer an immutable God may be expected to hear in mercy.

6. The unchangeable perfection of God, is a doctrine full of comfort to his people. This world, with all its concerns, bears the stamp of mutability. *It furnishes no objects on which the good man may safely fix his affections,*

or repose his hopes of happiness. Can he confide in himself? His own heart, alas, is too treacherous to be trusted. His best purposes, his best joys, are inconstant. To-day, perhaps, he meets God, in the sanctuary; meets God, at the communion-table; meets God, in the closet;—has some soul-refreshing views of his glory, and rises almost to the ecstasy of an angel. To-morrow, he sinks again into darkness, and is a poor worm of the earth. Some interposing cloud of unbelief shuts him away from God, his spirit droops, his heart becomes cold, his comforts die.—And is he the only inconstant man, among the followers of Christ? Around him he sees all, all is fluctuation. Some whom he deemed shining Christians, turned apostates; churches, once distinguished for their attachment to pure religion, sunk into pernicious errors; pulpits, where Mathers and Whitefields prayed and preached, occupied by men who “deny the Lord that bought them.” Nay, if he extend his view to remoter periods, he sees the churches, which were planted by Paul and his illustrious associates, become extinct; and the very spot where the Saviour died for the redemption of men, now to be rescued from the grossest darkness, by missionaries of the cross from distant countries!

And if stability is not found in the concerns of religion itself, shall he expect to find it in mere *earthly* objects? Here his brightest prospects are liable to be suddenly overcast. To-day, perhaps, finds him in prosperity, clasping some beloved object to his heart; to-morrow may tear away that object, and wring that heart with agony. Ask the aged man whose eyes are dim with years, who looks around him to find the associates of his youthful days, and they are all gone to the grave,—does he doubt that this world is mutable? Ask the man of business, one hour possessed of a princely estate, and the next, thrust down to bankruptcy and beggary,—does he doubt that this world is mutable? Ask the weeping mother, who bends over the dying pillow of her son; while she sees the object of her fondest cares and hopes smitten with a deadly disease, and the face that lately bloomed with health, covered with a mortal paleness,—does she doubt that this world is mutable? Ah! brethren, this is a changing world. Its history, indeed, is but a history of changes. “As for man,” its noblest inhabitant, “his days are as grass, as the flower of the field so he flourisheth, the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.” Heroes that made the earth tremble, have gone down to the grave. Families, that in the arrogance of pride and power, exacted the homage of millions, have been forgotten. Cities, renowned as seats of learning, arts, and opulence, have fallen into ruins. Such this world has been, and such it will be, till that last, great change, which shall close all the changes of time, “when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.”

Amid these scenes of fluctuation, is there no object then in heaven or earth that is unchanging? Yes, *one*: *God* is unchanging. Here is stability.

“His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
“And bids earth roll,—nor heeds her idle whirl.”

God is his happiness, therefore his happiness is certain and everlasting. What though earthly comforts are transitory, earthly friends frail and changeable ; God is a friend, sincere, unfailling, almighty. While his judgments fill the wicked with dismay, "there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." While his thunder rends the heavens, he whispers peace to his people. Tempest and uproar may sweep over the earth, but the church will live, will triumph : her God is unchanging, and He has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved ; He uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge : therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled ; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Blessed, O Lord of Hosts, is the man that trusteth in thee."

Lastly ; The immutability of God is a doctrine full of terror to his enemies. To each of you, my impenitent hearers, this subject speaks with alarming authority. You have a controversy with Jehovah. This controversy cannot cease, without a change in *Him*, or in *you*. He cannot change, for the least alteration in his character would mar its perfection, and subvert his moral government. You will not change, for you are supremely in love with sin. What must be the result of this controversy ? I tremble to declare a truth so awful, and yet so certain ;—it must be your eternal ruin, if you remain at enmity with God. How can it be otherwise ? The wheel of Divine government moves steadily forward. You, an insect, dare to take your stand before it, to oppose its progress ; and shall you not be crushed ? Why will you suspend your only hope of safety on impossibility ? Can you escape Omniscience ? Can you resist Omnipotence ? Can you imagine that He who is immutably holy and true, will cease to abhor, or forget to punish sin ? No ;—you must turn to God, by timely and true repentance, or, I say again, you are certainly, you are eternally undone. Though now his vengeance slumbers, he has wrath in store for the ungodly. "Hath he *said*, and shall he not *do* it ? hath he *spoken*, and shall he not *make it good* ?" "The wicked are reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath ; the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this."

SERMON LVIII.

By ALVAN HYDE, D.D.

LEE, MASSACHUSETTS.

THE NATURE AND REASONABLENESS OF SUBMISSION TO GOD.

II KINGS, vii. 3, 4.—*And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate; and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.*

THIS resolution was formed by men, whose lives were truly in jeopardy. They saw no more prospect of escaping death than the sinner, who is deeply convicted of his lost state, sees of escaping the everlasting wrath of a holy God. These men were Israelites, belonging to Samaria, and lived in the wicked reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab. Provoked by the sins of Israel, God raised up Benhadad, king of Syria, as his rod of correction; who came with an army and besieged Samaria. He continued the blockade until he brought on a famine in the city, which threatened all the inhabitants with death. Instances occurred in which mothers laid violent hands upon their children to satisfy the cravings of hunger in their families. At this awful juncture, there were in Israel four men infected with the plague of leprosy; and according to the law of Moses, they were commanded, being unclean, to dwell alone without the camp. *Their* situation was more deplorable than that of those who remained in the city, as they had fewer sources of help.

That eminent prophet, Elisha, was at this time in Samaria, a witness of this appalling scene of suffering and distress, and was even charged, by the wicked king of Israel, as being instrumental of it all. When this famine was at its height, and when death, in the most frightful form, seemingly was about to enter every house, Elisha boldly prophesied, that there would be an abundant supply for the sufferers, the next day; an event which then appeared *impossible*. Addressing the people with a loud voice, he said, "Thus saith the Lord; Tomorrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." This drew forth a scoffing reply from a man, on whose hand the king leaned, who daringly insinuated, that if the Lord would make *windows in heaven*, such a thing could not be. "Behold," said the man of God, "thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." All this was fulfilled the following day.

The four lepers, at the gate, not knowing what the prophet had said, and viewing death to be *certain*, whether they went into the city, or abode where they were, adopted the remarkable resolution in the text. They said one to another, *Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city,*

then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. These men, putting their lives in their hands, threw themselves on the mercy of those, from whom they had no reason to expect any *favor*. Death was before them, and they said, *we shall but die*. While they were forming this resolution, the Lord was marvellously, and miraculously, effecting their *deliverance* and *safety*. They went to the Syrians without having *one condition* to propose, not knowing but their lives would be immediately taken, and that too in a cruel manner; but to their great surprise, there was not an enemy in the camp. All their wants were abundantly supplied at once.

This remarkable account is fitted to remind us of the resolution which the sinner forms of turning unto God, when brought to *see* and *feel* the necessity of his case. It also reminds us of the *manner*, in which the returning sinner approaches to God, without having *one condition* to propose; resigning his everlasting portion into the hands of one whom he has *offended*. It is true, the cases are not, in all respects, parallel; but it must be acknowledged, that the resolution formed by these men is a striking picture of the resolution of the returning broken-hearted sinner. In *their* case, nothing farther is brought into view than the disorder of their bodies; their distress for want of food, and their exposure to temporal death. But returning sinners have been made sensible of a malady in their *souls*; and whatever way they turned their eyes, eternal destruction was before them. We have no occasion to decide the *moral* state of these men.—Whatever this might be, they formed the same resolution with respect to their *temporal* safety, which sinners ought to form, with respect to their *eternal* safety. In the extremity of their distress, they resolved to throw themselves upon the *mercy of the Syrians*, from whom they had no ground to expect favor: Sinners are bound, from every consideration, to cast themselves upon the mercy of God, whom they have highly provoked, but who has made ample provision for their reinstatement in his favor, and given his word that he will *abundantly* pardon, as soon as they return. Surely sinners, who act freely, and always in view of motives, ought to be as solicitous to secure the interest of their *immortal souls*, as these unhappy men were to obtain relief for their *bodies*. This truth is so obvious, that it must commend itself to their consciences. They are then invited to a serious consideration of the following points:—

I. The present condition of impenitent sinners involves *certain death*, or the *loss of their souls*.

II. The only *wise* and *safe* step is to surrender themselves *unreservedly* into the hands of God.

III. If they do this, the God of all grace will effect their *deliverance* and bring *salvation* to them.

The interesting occurrence before us, recorded by the Holy Spirit for our instruction, presents the case of those, who saw death staring them in the face, whatever way they turned their eyes. But *temporal death*, though it assail us in the most awful shape, is not to be compared with another death of which

the Scriptures abundantly speak. I refer to the death of the *soul*; which is an evil infinitely more to be deprecated than to pine away with hunger. What *is* the death of the soul? Not its annihilation, or ceasing to exist, but its losing all hope, all restraints, and sinking into everlasting horror and wretchedness. The soul is capable of experiencing this death; and, according to the testimony of God, is exposed to it; yea, more, it is an evil which is inevitable without repentance. To this immense loss the Saviour referred in the following words:—"What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" When a *soul dies*, or when a sinner loses his soul, he ceases for ever to be a prisoner of hope, and plunges into a state of *endless despair*. He is banished from all good, and separated unto all evil. This is the second death. Annihilation, dreaded as it is, is not to be compared with such an evil. But the present condition of impenitent sinners involves the *certainty* of this death, no less than the condition of the lepers involved the certainty of their famishing with hunger. We are, then, brought to contemplate an *awful fact*, and one on which no impenitent sinner, unless his conscience has become seared, can dwell without trembling. That there is no ground to question the fact now stated, is evident from *divine threatenings*.

The reality and awful import of these threatenings should be seriously pondered. What did God say to *Adam*, when stating to him what would be the inevitable consequence of his disobedience? *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*: or dying, thou shalt die. The import of this first threatening to man is, In the day thou *sinnest*, thou shalt be for ever undone, as to help in thyself, or in any other creature. Thou shalt sink into a state, which will be *hopeless*. This was particularly addressed to Adam, and through him, as a federal head, to all his posterity. Accordingly we find the divine denunciation afterward was—*The soul* (meaning any person) *that sinneth shall die*. The momentous question may then be put:—Have we not *all* sinned? Have we not *all* broken the divine law? Are we not *all* under the curse? Admitting this as a truth, which cannot be denied, it will follow, that our present condition, if we are in a state of nature, is such as should awaken all our anxieties. We are undone, and for ever undone, as to any help in *ourselves*, or in any *created arm*. As transgressors of the divine law, we are threatened with eternal death, and by the Holy Legislator himself. He regards his violated law, as being infinitely more important than *we* are, or even the *whole created system*. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Let us, then, look which way we will, eternal death stares us in the face. If we have not taken refuge in Christ, the threatenings of an infinitely holy God stand with all their force against us. He is bound, by his word, to render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." *The wages of sin is death*. This is the testimony of God. Certainly, then, our present condition, if we are living in sin, involves the certain loss of our souls, no less than the condition of the lepers, while the famine prevailed, involved the certainty of their perishing with hunger.

The same truth, respecting the condition of sinners, is evident from the *state of their hearts*. Does not the Holy Spirit represent them, as being *dead in trespasses and sins*? In all those, who are under the power and dominion of sin, the work of ruin has already begun. They carry death in their souls. They now have the same temper of heart, which is possessed by those who have died in their sins, and are already beyond the reach of hope; and differ from them in no other respect, than that they are in a state of probation, and under great restraints. Whither are the corrupt propensities of their hearts *leading* them, and *rapidly leading* them? To this inquiry, there can be but one answer:—they are leading them on to interminable wo! Looking, then, to the state of their hearts, we are compelled to say, their present condition must issue in their everlasting ruin. When we see a person languishing in the last stage of a *consumption*, or whose body is nearly consumed with a *cancer*, the impression is deeply made on our minds, that death is unavoidable. No less strongly do the hearts of *all sinners*, while such, indicate the approach of *eternal death*.

Further, all unbelievers are represented, in God's word, as being *now* in a state of condemnation. Look at the following plain testimony of Christ: *He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*. For the same reason he says, *The wrath of God abideth on him*. This is the uniform language of the sacred Scriptures, respecting the state and condition of all who live in unbelief. If impenitent sinners would attend seriously to their case, they would find themselves no less exposed to the rigour of the law, than if Christ had never died; they would even see, that the law has *greater* demands on this account. They may be compared to a criminal, who has had his *trial*, been found *guilty*, and has received sentence of *death*. The Lord has written their *characters*, and their *sentence*, as with sunbeams. Though at present wholly occupied with worldly pursuits, and busy here and there, they want not evidence of their alarming condition.

In faithfulness, I must add another affecting thought:—all unbelievers have taken their stand among God's enemies, and if they *remain* there, their destruction is as certain as the *truth* of God. In the great struggle between sin and holiness they have chosen their side. They belong to a kingdom which is destined to be overthrown; and all its adherents, of every grade, must inevitably perish in its ruins. The word has gone out of the mouth of the Lord. Can it then fail? Can the wicked hope to succeed against the arm of the Almighty! Their present condition, standing as they do among the enemies of Jehovah, is as certainly connected with the *loss of their souls*, as the condition of the unhappy men, in the text, having nothing to allay their hunger, was connected with the *death of their bodies*. In this awfully exposed situation, what can they do? This interesting question will be answered by showing,

II. That the only *wise* and *safe* step is to surrender themselves *unreservedly* into the hands of God.

They must act the part of the famishing lepers. Like them, they have an

important *decision* to make; a decision which must prompt them to act in view of danger, and to act without delay. The resolution of these distressed men, as it was immediately followed by corresponding actions, furnished evidence of their having an irresistible conviction of the *necessity* of their case. So pungent was this conviction, that it *aroused* them; and they felt that what *could* be done, must be done *immediately*. It was certain death to remain where they were, or to go into the city, and it could be no more than certain death to go to the Syrians, who were their *avowed enemies*; and, at that time, thirsting for their blood. They resolved on the *latter*; not knowing how they should be disposed of, and yet it being the only course which presented to their anxious minds the least *gleam* of hope.

The condition of sinners, as to their immortal souls, is, at least in some respects, similar to that of these men. It is certain death to remain where they are, in a state of *unbelief* and *impenitence*—and it is certain death to attempt merely to work out a righteousness of their own. They are now in “the broad way that leadeth to destruction,” and urged onward by powers of earth and hell; and should they arouse, and make resistance, relying on their *own strength*, or on any *created arm*, it would be wholly without avail. They would still be in the same “broad way.” Their only alternative is to turn and make an unreserved surrender of themselves to the mercy of that God, whom they have offended. Nowhere else can help be found for perishing sinners.

But what state of feelings would be implied in their *coming* to this resolution? What do they *believe*? Of what truths are they now *convinced*?—One thing of which they have gained a full conviction is, that their case is *deplorable*. They realize, that they must inevitably perish, if they remain where they now are. They see nothing but *death* before them. They have taken their last morsel—and see that in themselves there is no help. This is *one* conviction they have. Nor is this all.—They see they have no *claims*. If they go to God for relief, they see they must go, as *sinners*, and justly condemned. They must go with an entire consciousness of having acted the part of God's enemies, and, on this account, loathing and abhorring themselves. It is a feeling common to sinners, that they must make themselves better before they submit to God. They are looking for some course, which they may take, as *preparatory* to their submitting. But the only thing which will recommend them, as sinners, is a sense of *utter vileness* and *unworthiness*. How did the repenting prodigal feel? “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” This feeling is an entire renunciation of all claims.

When sinners surrender themselves unconditionally to God, they leave it with him to dispose of them, as he sees best. They are calm and happy, when, in their *feelings*, they take this ground. They have no conditions to offer—no reserves to make. The famishing men, whose deplorable condition, whose painful struggle of mind and firm resolution are kept in view to impress *truth* and *duty* upon sinners, counted the cost before they decided on casting themselves upon the mercy of the Syrians. All they had to say was,

“If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.” In like manner, when a sinner surrenders himself unreservedly to God, he casts himself upon his *mere mercy*. No conditions does he state. But here the *selfish, unsubdued heart* recoils. The prayer of sinners who are in some degree awakened, but who are not humbled, is of the following import;—“Lord, we will give up all to thee, if we can only first have satisfactory evidence that our *souls shall be saved*.” This, however, is consistent with perfect selfishness. They demand other evidence than the word of God furnishes, that he will *save them*, before they can feel willing to submit themselves to his disposal. What *greater* or more *assuming* condition could they state? They have no confidence in God, no love for his character, no faith in his promises, unless he will now make some extraordinary manifestation of his kindness to *them*. An infinite favor they demand, before they can confide in him, and devote themselves to his service. They seek their own interest, and nothing else. Selfishness is supreme. But is this the submission which the gospel enjoins? Do such feelings resemble the self-denying religion of the Lord Jesus, who gave his *life* for his people? No candid mind will hesitate to answer. Could the unhumiliated sinner know, that God would treat him according to his real deserts, he would, at once, abandon all thought of submission. He is not *prepared* to leave it with a holy God to do with him as he *sees best*. He is not prepared for any other decision than to have his own will granted. Often is the nature of this submission exemplified among men in the expression of their feelings, with respect to worldly concerns. When, in their dealings with each other, there is a collision of interests, they contend earnestly for their respective claims. The points in *dispute*, in which they feel a deep interest, they *pretend* to submit to the decision of impartial judges, but when the result is known, they betray the unreconciled state of their minds. But where there is true submission, the whole matter is left. The sinner, in giving up himself to God, acknowledges *ill-desert*, renounces *claims*, and casts himself on divine mercy, without any conditions or reserves. If he save me, I shall live, and if he cut me off, I shall but have the just reward of my iniquities. In view of his wretched case, he says, “Not my will, but thine be done.” So taught the Saviour—“He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.” The only wise and safe course, then, for lost sinners, is to make an unconditional surrender of themselves to God. They must go as they are, and acknowledge themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, in a lost and helpless state, and leave it with Him, who cannot err, to decide what shall be done. Nor will this be in vain. For,

III. The God of all grace will effect their *deliverance*, and bring *salvation* to them.

The distressed men, whose state and conduct are kept in view, to illustrate the nature of submission, formed their resolution, not knowing but that they should be immediately put to death. They had no assurance, nor even the least evidence, of the contrary. But, when they came to the camp, to their great surprise, not an enemy was to be seen. They had all *fled*. The Lord, who holdeth the hearts of all men in his hands, had discomfited them. “He

made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host : and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us." They immediately left the camp, as it was, full of every thing which these famishing men needed. This astonishing event was of the Lord, who wrought deliverance for the distressed, and brought them into the possession of abundance.

We have, then, before us a striking illustration of what the Lord, in his infinite mercy, does for sinners, as soon as they throw down their arms of rebellion, and surrender to him. When they feel compelled, from an entire conviction of their lost state, to cast themselves upon his mercy, and leave it with him to dispose of them, they are, at once, surrounded with a fulness. They come to an important decision—their proud and stubborn hearts yield—they give up their *all*, and in giving it up, they find "the pearl of great price." They find safety, peace, and happiness, where they had always refused to *seek* for them.

Fellow-sinners, there is one important point in which your case is altogether different from that of the lepers. They could have, at the most, but a *gleam of hope*. For *you*, in your perishing condition, ample provision has been made, and it is freely offered, "without money and without price." Christ has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." Of this most interesting fact, *you* have clear evidence ; yea, *you* have demonstration. The God of mercy never fails of sending salvation to those who cheerfully submit to him. He has given his word, that he will do it, and this is the best possible security. Why, then, are not all sinners ready to take this course ? Because they do not believe the testimony of God. They do not believe their case is desperate. They have not yet eaten their last morsel. They are for helping themselves. As soon as they abandon their own trusting places, and give up *all*, they find a rich profusion of blessings flowing in upon them, through the mediation of Christ. Then, and not till then, the glorious plan of salvation opens to their view, and Christ appears to them to be "all in all." Then, they have a sight of his infinite mercy and compassion, manifested in those words :—"Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Happy experience has taught them, that "the poor in spirit," the self-emptied, "are blessed." "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

And now, impenitent sinners, having illustrated the several points proposed, I would solemnly exhort you, for remaining in a condition which involves *certain and eternal death*. Let the situation and conduct of these famishing men, instruct and arouse you. The inspired account of them, which you may read in your Bibles, I have improved, as a similitude, to convince you of your perishing condition, and to teach you to be wise for yourselves. The Saviour often impressed truths upon his hearers, by recurring to interesting facts, as well as by parables. When you seriously reflect on the condition of these men, sitting without the city, infected with a loathsome disease, not having a morsel of any thing to satisfy their hunger, and expecting nothing but death, in a most frightful form, do you not *pity* them ? Who

of you would not tremble to be in their wretched condition? Truly their case was pitiable, and seemingly must draw a sigh from the hardest heart; but it was nothing compared with your own. *They* were expecting *temporal death*; but what are *you* expecting, as transgressors of the divine law, bound to eternity?—or rather what have you *reason* to expect? Do you credit the testimony of God? Do you admit, what has been shown in this discourse, that the present condition of impenitent sinners involves the final ruin of their immortal souls? You will not deny it. Then all of you, who have, to this day, neglected the “great salvation,” are now bending over the eternal pit. And is this a safe position? Is not God, who is “angry with the wicked every day,” especially angry with those who know his overtures of mercy, and yet despise them? Have not awful threatenings against such gone out of his mouth? And, God of mercy as he is, can his *truth* fail?

I feel that I am now speaking to those, who “*know* their Master’s will,” and to whom the “great salvation” is sent; and that I need only appeal to conscience and the heart. Think not then, sinners, to gainsay God’s truth; nor “change it into a lie.” Rather have pity on yourselves, and no longer act against light. No longer cherish “enmity against God.” Have pity on yourselves, while the Saviour yet waits with open arms, and bleeding brow, and beseeching voice. Let his love melt you down at his feet. “Submit yourselves to God.” Your long delay of repentance evinces *deep-rooted depravity*; and the necessity of a work of the Holy Spirit. Yield yourselves then to His influence, and to your great surprise and joy, you will find yourselves made “willing in the day of his power,”—willing to act *rationally*—willing to love and serve the Lord of glory. This the gospel enjoins and conscience now urges. Why then sit you here and die, while Jesus is yet standing and knocking at your door? Rise and bid him welcome, who once poured out his life for your sake. Give him your heart—your life—your all—and “his banner over you will be Love.” AMEN.

Come, anxious sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come, with your guilt and fear oppress,
And make this last resolve:

“I’ll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know his courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

“Prostrate I’ll lie before his throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I’ll tell him, I’m a wretch undone
Without his sovereign grace.

“I can but perish if I go;
I am resolv’d to try:
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die.”

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LIX.

BY JOHN M. MASON, D.D.
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FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 12.—*For I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.*

IF ever there was an unlikely subject of conversion to the Christian faith, it was Saul of Tarsus. His education, his habits, his prospects, his ardent and active zeal against Christians, his powerful intellect, his pride, his very conscience, all under the influence of wrong impressions, rendered his perseverance in Judaism morally certain, and the idea of his change, in the eyes of thinking men, perfectly chimerical. Satan himself seemed not less likely to become an apostle, than this fierce and intrepid Jew. His active spirit, and his implacable malignity, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," would, if permitted to take its course, have "made short work with the dissenters" from the order established at Jerusalem; would have crushed the infant church; and scarcely left materials for one paragraph of the general historian. But the Lord Jesus had other views for his church, and other employment for the persecutor. In the height of his career—in the very act of executing the bloody commission of the high-priest—when surrounded by armed men, to enforce his orders—at mid-day—on the public road—near a celebrated city—a burst of glory from the face of Jesus Christ eclipses the brightness of the sun; an invisible power smites him and all his company to the earth; and a voice, the authority of which made him feel, that his Creator was speaking, addresses to him those memorable words; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* The high-priest, the Sanhedrim, the nation whose hopes all centre in him, his character, his commission, are forgotten in an instant. Men have no leisure for any thing else, when they are conscious that God is speaking. *Who art thou, Lord?* exclaims the trembling and astonished persecutor: *I am Jesus*, answers the heavenly voice, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* *Lord*, replies he, every disposition to cavil or tamper, being perfectly subdued, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Gentle as a lamb, the high-spirited and ferocious Saul obeys the mandate. Smitten blind by the light which shone around him, he is led by the hand into Damascus: where he remained *three days without light, and did neither eat nor drink.* Under such tutelage as no other man ever enjoyed, he passes through the process of conviction and conversion—experiences the second birth—has a new heart put within him—is instructed

in the mysteries of the kingdom—is furnished with all gifts and graces—is taught the service which he is to perform, and the sufferings which he is to endure—and comes forth *not a whit behind the chiefest apostles*, and straightway *preaches Christ* in the synagogues, *that he is the Son of God*. Five-and-twenty years, had he tried the service of Jesus Christ, when he penned this epistle to Timothy, proving, by turns, and sometimes all together, the honors, the victories, the disappointments, the pains, the sorrows, of his apostleship. At this very moment he was a martyr to the truth; and suffering unheard-of things, for the word of his testimony. Yet he utters no complaint; his tone is firm and cheerful; it is the voice of Salvation *from the belly of Hell*. *I am not ashamed*, says he, *for I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day*.

Brethren, there is something in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that persuasion of his ability which belongs to his faithful followers, which bears them up over every discouragement, and will at length enable them to elude the great destroyer, and to fly, *on the wings of the morning*, to the place of their eternal rest. Paul was an example. But he was so, on principles which are common to the household of faith. It was not as an *apostle*, but as a *believer*, that he cherished so triumphant a hope, and sung so sweet a song, in the house of his pilgrimage. It will be of advantage to us, if we take a nearer view of Paul's *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of that *perfect confidence*, which he entertained, that all should be safe in his hands.

I. The *knowledge* which Paul had of his Redeemer; "*I know whom I have believed.*"

The apostle's knowledge of Jesus Christ was personal, that is, it was a knowledge of Christ himself, and centred in himself; not merely an acquaintance with his religion. Many people imagine, that to know something about the Christian religion, to be able to explain it, and ready to recommend it, is equivalent with knowing Christ himself. Whencesoever they imbibed such a notion, it was not from their Bible. This makes a very broad difference between the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and every other sort of knowledge; and the Scripture does not deal in vain distinctions. The knowledge and the love which accompany salvation, go together, and are coupled by the Scripture to the *person* of the Saviour. *That I may know HIM*, saith Paul. Whom having not seen, *ye love*, adds Peter. Now here is the parting point with many a decent profession, yet the very point upon which eternal happiness is suspended. Many a demonstration of the Christian verity, and many a splendid panegyric on its excellence, worth, and necessity, have flowed from lips which the fire of God's altar never purified; have been prompted by hearts which were never touched by the love of Christ. Startle not; as if I preached an unheard-of doctrine—but go, if you are not afraid of the experiment—summon the *tongues of men and angels* to speak the praises of revealed truth; and then stand aghast at discovering, that without *charity*, that vivifying principle in the world of grace, you are no better than *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*. In living religion *Christ is all*. The hearts of his people are, without exception, drawn, in tender affection, to *himself*. The thought, that *he loved me and gave himself for me*, filled, and subdued,

and melted the heart of one apostle ; and drew from another the gracious declaration, *We love him, because he first loved us* ; and so do all his sincere followers find the fact to be at the present hour.

Now to both this knowledge and this love of Christ something more is necessary than can be learned from human books, or taught by human speech, or enforced by human example. That which happened unto Paul must happen unto us. God must *reveal his Son in us* ; the Holy Spirit must *take of the things which are His, and show them unto us*. Is it wonderful that Christ Jesus was so glorious in the eyes of the apostles ; and is now so glorious in the eyes of all who have an apostle's hope ?

1. Paul was enabled to take an enlarged and decisive view of the glory of the Redeemer's person. He never dreamt that idiot dream of a *created* Saviour. There was no doubt in his mind, nor is there in the minds of any who tread in his steps, whatever there be in the minds of those who pride themselves in their distinction, as philosophical believers, that he who is *the eternal Life*, must be the *true God—God over all, blessed for ever*. He perceived him to be, and he celebrated him, and taught others to expect him, as the *great God our Saviour*. It was, in his judgment, a mystery, the great mystery of godliness—the very pillar and ground of truth, without which the whole fabric of salvation falls to ruins—that *God was manifest in the flesh*, and so became our *Brother*, and has made us bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh

In the person, moreover, of Jesus Christ, all the counsels of the Godhead centre. *In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. If God *reconciles the world unto himself, it is in Christ Jesus*. If *the light of his glory shines unto us, it is in the face of Jesus Christ*. If he gathers together in one, a new family, composed of holy angels and redeemed men, he gathers them in Christ. If *every knee is ordered to bow, and every tongue to confess*, it is to *Jesus Christ, who has a name which is above every name*, and has it expressly for this purpose. In fine, the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, with this end, that *all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father* ; and that under the fearful sanction, that whosoever shall refuse so to honor the Son, shall find all his worship rejected: *He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent him*.

2. Paul had equally lofty views of the Redeemer's mediatorial work ; by whose perfect obedience *many shall be made righteous—who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity—who is the propitiation through faith in his blood, that God may be just, and the JUSTIFIER of him that believeth in Jesus—so that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace—who has risen again from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept—who has gone into heaven, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us—who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us ; and is able, therefore, to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him*.

3. Paul had, further, a view of the glory which Jesus Christ has promised to his followers. For them death hath no sting—over them, the grave boasts no victory—nor the second death any power. Their Saviour shall reclaim

their dead bodies : "He shall call, and they shall answer him out of the dust." Neither death nor hell shall retain them for an instant. They shall spring up in all the alertness of spiritual and incorruptible bodies—shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, and go, in their whole persons, to be for ever with the Lord.

All these things the apostle saw—saw them in the light and with the eyes of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. They left on his soul an impression never to be obliterated: an impression as deep and vivid as the seal of the Holy Ghost—as the image of the living God. Whenever, afterward, he speaks of his Redeemer, and of his people's hope in him, his spirit catches fire. O, how unlike the men who are dazed in triple ice when they approach the throne of the Son of God! He darts up into the heavens, and when he descends again to earth, it is to scatter

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

Hear this child of faith and of the skies, singing and shouting, and welcoming the decease which was to take him home:—*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing.*

Throughout his whole representation of the glory, grace, and promises of Christ, it will not fail to be observed, that there is not so much as a hint of any *doubt*. The Christian religion is not a religion of doubts. Doubting Christians there are, but doubting faith there is none. And it is only when their faith is very low, that there is any place for doubt. "O thou of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The religion of which God is the author, cannot be a religion of doubts. He is the immutable Truth. There is no room for conjectures, or mere opinions. It is a dishonor to its glorious Revealer, to say upon a subject of eternal hope, "That it is my opinion." *Your opinion*—and to what more is it entitled than the opinion of another man? But when you speak peremptorily, "This is the truth of God," the ground is entirely changed—then "to the law and the testimony." Accordingly the declaration of Paul has no *conjecture* about it. He speaks with the confidence of a man intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ; "I know whom I have believed." A gracious boldness, for an example of which you may in vain turn over the ten thousand pages of philosophical Christians. They know nothing of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. They have a great many notions; they sport their several opinions; they are very wise in their own conceit; but about the Lord Jesus, his glory, and his grace, whatever they may prate, they know nothing, and have not the effrontery to pretend that they know any thing; for the object of all their philosophy is to strip him of his glory, and to fritter away his grace, till it is not worth a sinner's acceptance. But what says Paul? *I know* him; there is no uncertainty in the matter; *I know* him, and am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed unto him.

II. We are thus brought to the second point; which is the apostle's *confidence* that every thing is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Here two inquiries challenge our notice : First, what had the apostle "committed" unto his Saviour? Second, whence arose his assurance that it was perfectly safe in his hands?

1. What was the deposite which Paul had committed to Jesus Christ? It was evidently something personal—something about which if his hope were deceived, he might be put to shame—something in which he peculiarly acted as a *believer*: What was this? What could it be but his immortal soul, his redeemed body, his whole interest in the salvation of God? Men in health and spirits may talk, and do talk, with lightness and gayety, about their own decease, and affect to think it strange that any but a villain, should entertain the least apprehension about his appearance before God. But when age, accident, or sickness, proclaims their course to be nearly run; and the stock of life to be almost exhausted—when the chill atmosphere of the grave smites them with the last ague; and death's icy hand begins to lay hold upon their frame—when the world, with all its illusions, fades upon the sight, and possesses no more the power of charming—when ETERNITY rises in all its magnitude—displays its dread realities—draws back the curtain from the judgment-seat—announces the approach of the righteous Judge, and the necessary and speedy appearance before him—O, then, lightness and gayety flee away. They have other thoughts altogether about putting off this body. Nothing but the Christian's hope can sustain their spirits. Then there is seen an emphasis in his words of faith which was not comprehended before: his brow, glittering in the death-sweat, is encircled with a glory, which sheds infinite contempt upon the baubles of earth; and commands them to remove with their impertinence to a respectful distance. O, I have seen a believer preparing to resign his soul into the hands of his dear Redeemer—have seen him make a practical comment upon the declaration of Paul—have seen how infinitely trifling and foolish the world appears when she presumes to draw near him, and to open her absurd lips. The very worldling could not endure it. Then is the moment of the dying conqueror's triumph. He commends his spirit to Him that loved him, and washed him in his own blood—commits his body to the Resurrection and the Life—commits it "in sure and certain hope" of its being raised again to eternal life: and as the breath departs from his lips, he shouts, Salvation! and is away, amidst the alleluias of angels, to the "bosom of his Father and his God." What filled him with ecstasy at the arrival of that event which is nature's terror, and from which most of his race shrink and shudder? It was this: "I *know* whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him, against that day." And in what light, think you, does his faith contemplate the Lord Jesus, in trusting him with so precious a deposite? As a creature? a man? a mere man? "frail and peccable?" They who can risk themselves in such hands, *may*; but must sink down to hell with all the faith they have. A man! a mere man! like myself! I would not thus intrust my body, nor a single member of it, to the mightiest angel that God ever created. Oh no! no! when a Christian anticipates his departure to the eternal world, he must have other and better security. Heaven is not more distant from earth, than is the ground of his confidence from such a broken reed. And never did you hear, nor will you ever hear in fa-

ture, Paul's language from the mouth of one who makes such desperate experiments with his immortality. But,

2. Whence arose the apostle's persuasion that all is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ? He knew what the Redeemer *is*; what he has *promised*; and what *pledges* he has given both of his ability and his faithfulness.

1st. Who the Redeemer *is*. The only begotten Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. The Lord of the invisible world, who was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death. His word equally raised the dead and paralyzed the living. He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, with fearful deprecations of his power. He trod upon the earth as upon a province of his government. The submissive elements performed his word. He is now in heaven, at the right hand of God; angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. He is given to be head over all things to the church, and makes all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. The light of the Divinity is in his eye; the thunder of God's power is in his arm; and he is most worthy of all the confidence which our souls can concentrate.

2nd. Paul knew what the Redeemer has *promised*. Hear—*I give to all my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. He that believeth on me shall never perish, but I will raise him up at the last day. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.* Who that shares in these *exceeding great and precious promises*, can dispute that Paul had the best reason in the world to believe the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness*?—to believe him without hesitation—to believe him with his whole heart and soul? *Where is doubting then?* Who dares admit even the thought, that the Lord Jesus will break his word? Admit for an instant the thought, that *God should lie!* Where is doubting then, I repeat? *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

3rd. The Lord Jesus Christ had given very sufficient *pledges* of his ability and faithfulness to keep what was committed to him, in what he had done *for* the apostle; and in what he had done *in* him; and he was multiplying the reasons of his confidence, by what he was then continuing to do for him.

1. What had Jesus Christ done *for* Paul? The same that he has done for all the household of God. He became Paul's surety; obeyed perfectly the law of condemnation; authorized him, in humble faith, to claim and to plead that obedience, in the room of his own disobedience. He clothed Paul with righteousness—the righteousness of God—the righteousness of God by faith: directing and enabling him to make it his own, and to present it as such, where it would be properly valued, and sure to be accepted—at the bar of infinite Justice. He well knew what place should be assigned to it in the justification of a sinner. He placed it between himself and the righteous God: and gloried in it accordingly, as his perfect protection against the stroke of divine justice; as his only and his unailing title to eternal life; as that pure gold, in which the furnace of ultimate trial should not detect a particle of *dross, nor a single flaw*. Not a syllable would he hear of any works but the

works of Jesus Christ, to justify him before God. *That I may be found in him,* exclaims he, *not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This, indeed, is a vital part in the justification of sinful men. Many seem to think that they have no need of any thing but pardon. How then can they be *justified* by a sentence according to law, which enjoins *perfect obedience*? How can they become entitled to eternal life, which was originally promised to such obedience? What has overturned God's constitution? What has broken the connexion, established by himself, between the condition and the reward? Nay, that constitution stands; and sinners, if justified at all, must be justified according to its terms—by *obedience*, by *perfect obedience*—but not by such obedience, be it remembered, as *you* can perform. *You* are all as an unclean thing, and all your righteousness as filthy rags. This renders the plan of grace so wonderful in our eyes—so infinitely worthy of the wisdom of God. The second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, has stepped into the first Adam's place, and done what he as our covenant head ought to have done; he has fulfilled the righteousness of the law. Thence his precious name, *JEHOVAH our righteousness*. Of this Paul was very certain; and it was one reason of his committing his eternal interests into the hands of Jesus Christ; with the perfect assurance that they would be safe there. Do you, my dear brethren, follow so blessed an example? Cast away, in your dealings with your Creator, “to the moles and to the bats,” every thing, every thing that can, by any possibility of construction, be reckoned as your own righteousness. The very best of it, trusted in, is no better than a millstone about your necks; and when God arises to Judgment, will sink you in “bottomless perdition.” Lay hold of that one righteousness of Jesus Christ; which is able to cover all who take refuge in it, from martyred Abel down to the last believer who shall cry, *Lord, save me, I perish.*

In the next place, Jesus Christ had paid Paul's debt. He owed nothing less than his soul to the violated law of God; and had not his Saviour interposed, the forfeit must have been exacted. But Christ became his security for the amount of that forfeit. He put his own neck under the sword of justice, and redeemed the life of the disciple by the surrender of his own;—redeemed it, without his wish or knowledge—redeemed it, while he was yet a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; that in his case, as a ring-leader of rebellion; that in me first—in me as *chief*—*Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering for a PATTERN to them who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting.* For when the fulness of the time was come, *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Thus, as their representative, sustaining their persons, meeting all the claims which the righteousness of God preferred, answering all accusations against them, facing every adversary, did the beloved One, as their substitute, and for their benefit, lay down his most precious life, for the lives of his chosen. The temptations of the evil one, the unbelief and contradiction of sinners, the insolence of his persecutors, and all the degradations of his humbled state—the whole weight of the curse of God, which would have crushed a world of angels—did he endure, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to

God. Then was the law magnified and made honorable; more magnified and made more honorable, than it would have been by the unsinning obedience of all the creatures to all eternity. Then he "by himself purged our sins"—then he paid the price of redemption, for "an innumerable multitude" of prisoners, whom he "*bought unto God by his blood;*" and having achieved the glorious work, "*entered into the holy place, and for ever sat down at the right hand of God, the Majesty on high.*" There are some who imagine, and who say, "that we know not, nor does it concern us to know, *in what manner the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins.*" And grieved I am to find in this number a writer who has done good service to the cause of truth, by stripping the philosophical christianity of the day of its borrowed plume, and exposing to the abhorrence of every reasonable man all the nakedness of its pretences to learning, to candor, to superior light, and all the unbounded insolence with which it treats the word of God itself. I allude to Magee on the Atonement, whose words I have quoted above. But our Lord has not left us in the dark on this point, of the justification of a sinner. We thank his blessed name, that we do know *precisely*, for he has explained to us, as fully as any doctrine in the whole Bible, the connexion which his sacrifice has with the remission of our sins. It is because he was *made sin for us*, that we are *made the righteousness of God in him*—because he *bore our sins and carried our sorrows*, that *by his stripes we are healed*. Had not Jesus been our representative, we should have known nothing, and could have told nothing, about the question, whether there is forgiveness with God. But because he took our place, therefore our sins are expiated. Because he bore the penalty due to us, therefore we are freely forgiven for his name sake, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. O believer, cling to this gracious connexion between Christ's suffering and your release, as to the sheet-anchor of your salvation. This and this alone will bear you up, when earth and earthly things are sinking around you. Paul trusted mightily to it. Therefore he was persuaded that there need be no fear of any thing committed to the Redeemer's hands.

2. Consider what Jesus Christ had done *in* the apostle. All that he had done *without*, had its counterpart *within* his soul. He had wrought out for him an everlasting salvation, and it was necessary that he should be put in possession of it—had purchased for him a heavenly kingdom, and the next thing was to make him fit for the enjoyment of it. Briefly, he turned Paul into a new man—turned him from darkness unto light—from Satan unto God—from sin unto holiness—changed the relentless persecutor into the suffering lamb—gave to all his affections a holy bias—to all his faculties a heavenly point—to all his pursuits a hallowed direction—filled him with love to Himself and to the souls of men; so that he counted not his life dear unto him, that he might "fulfil the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." This was, to Paul himself, the most stupendous miracle in his history. Could he afterwards question, whether the Lord Jesus has "power over all flesh"—over all spirit—when he had, within his own bosom, a living demonstration, no more equivocal than the pulsations of his heart, that the word of the Lord Jesus Christ can convert *the fiercest enemy into the most tender and faithful friend?* And could he

be at a loss—could he hesitate a moment—about committing that soul of his, with all its eternal interests, into hands which had done so great things for him and in him ?

3. Much as Jesus Christ had done for Paul, he had far more to do for him, ere his work was finished ; and was every day giving fresh tokens of his care and love. He was actually in the highest heavens interceding for the apostle. His intercession we may conceive to be an authoritative exhibition of his accepted sacrifice, in behalf of his people. Whatever he had purchased for them, he claims as a matter of right to be conferred upon them in such manner, degree, and season, as the Infinite Wisdom shall determine. Thus he sympathises with their sorrows : *We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.* And the secret communications of that sympathy are of infinite value.

He supplies their present wants, both of body and soul. "He who hangs creation on his arm, and feeds it at his board, will not let slip a ransomed child, nor let him starve." It was not a vain lesson that he taught his disciples—"Give us this day our daily bread." Moreover he holds their souls in life. The riches of glory treasured up in Christ Jesus, are the fund upon which they draw for their succour in every time of need. If their graces languish, he revives and quickens them. If they are scanty, he "giveth more grace." If they are hard beset in the spiritual warfare, he throws around them "the shield of his salvation," and in the end, makes them "more than conquerors."

Jesus Christ sends down the Holy Spirit to *instruct*. He compensates the personal absence of the Saviour. The monitions of this heavenly teacher cause the most simple to be wonderful proficient in divine things. They "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" He sends Him to *refresh*. He is in them "*a well of water springing up to everlasting life.*" He sends him to *invigorate*. They are "*strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man.*" He sends him to *console*. His name is *Comforter* ; and his consolations "*are neither few nor small.*" He sends him to *prosper them in difficult enterprises*. They succeed, "*not by might nor by power, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord.*"

Jesus Christ encircled Paul in his arms in the midst of personal danger. His path lay through snares and treacheries, and deaths unnumbered. If he fought with beasts at Ephesus ; if he was in the lion's mouth at Rome ; if he was stoned with stones at Lystra ; his kind and faithful Lord delivered him from them all. *Fear not, Paul,* he had said, *no man shall set upon thee to hurt thee ;* and he was true to his promise : and Paul was so sure of it, that he counted confidently upon his protection. *The Lord,* says he, *shall deliver me from every evil work, and shall preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.*

By all these means Paul's sanctification was improved. He became every day more meet than he was the day before, for an abundant entrance into his Master's kingdom. He accounted nothing done to purpose, while any thing remained to be done. Not even his past attainments, great and glorious as they were—not even the career of his services, though the most brilliant among the ranks of the saved, could check his ardour for further attain-

ments, for higher Christian distinction. *I count not myself*, says he, *to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Now put all these considerations together, and ask whether Paul's confidence in the ability and grace of the Lord Jesus, to keep what he had committed unto him, till the day of final decision, was weak or chimerical? Whether it was not the most sober conclusion, drawn from the firmest premises? Whether it left any possible room for misgivings, and fears? And whether Paul has not exemplified, in his own person, the privilege common to all believers, and the true and proper effect of the religion which they profess?

Let us try if we cannot reap some profitable instruction from this interesting subject.

1. Every real believer has direct and confidential transactions with the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul, he has committed all that he is, and all that he has—whatever is most precious for time and for eternity—his body, his soul, his hope, his reversion in heaven, to the hands of his faithful Redeemer. Have you done so, my hearers? Have you done it, professed Christians? Ah, how wide a difference does this make between the formalist, and the genuine disciple! Let me ask again, for the question is a vital one; You who name the name of Jesus, who pass for the converts of his grace, and have sworn fealty to his cause, what have you to say? Did you ever give yourselves up formally, fully, irrevocably, to be his property, and at his disposal? When, where, how, did you make the blessed surrender? How do you prove the fact? What obedience do you perform? What self-denials do you endure? What sacrifices, even of the most worthless of your possessions, the trash of this earth, do you offer? Who of all the numerous retainers of the Christian name, of all the decent professors of godliness, will trust his Redeemer for to-morrow's bread? Who of them would not rather rely on the respectable signer of a bank-note, than upon all the promises of the faithful God? Were it put to the trial, who of them would not grasp the paper, and let go the truth and the oath of God who cannot lie, among the uncertainties of life? And can any man with such practical feelings, really dupe himself with the persuasion that he trusts the Lord Jesus for the kingdom of the just? That he *believes* in that most generous sacrifice which Jesus Christ made for him—the blood of his cross? Not a word! Not a single word! He is as absolute an unbeliever in the Captain of our salvation, and as absolute an idolater, in his own way, as any poor wretch that ever threw himself under the wheels of Juggernaut. And that he will find, if death overtake him in his present condition, when the Stone which the builders rejected shall grind him to powder. Bear with me, my friends, I may not prophesy smooth things—may not palliate—I must declare the whole truth, on the peril of treason to my heavenly Master. If any of you find it to cut deep, *there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.* I can do nothing but commend you to *the Lord, the Healer.*

2. Let us remark a peculiar property in the Christian religion, as it exists in the Bible, and in the hearts of those who are thoroughly under its influ-

ence—unwavering confidence of spiritual and unseen realities—“I know whom I have believed.”

The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of *faith*. It acknowledges no conjecture, no surmises, no peradventure. It rests upon the surest of all foundations—that impenetrable rock on which the gates of hell can make not the least impression—the testimony of the living God. It demands the unhesitating consent of our hearts. It contains no provision for doubts. Doubting, in every possible degree, is an implied impeachment of the veracity of its divine Author, and most signally dishonors his glorious name. Every Christian in the world ought to say, as peremptorily as the apostle, “I know whom I have believed;” and to be carried by his faith as fearlessly and triumphantly along, as he was, through duties, difficulties, and death itself, perfectly assured that he shall find all safe at “that day.” Then why is the fact so different? Why is the world so full of doubts, and fears, and lamentations, even on the part of Christians themselves, that there is scarcely heard any more the “voice of joy and rejoicing in the tabernacles of the righteous.” The fact is indisputable; and allow me to say it is one of those high indecencies which disgrace your profession. It does not become you, Christians, to act and to talk as if your religion were no better than a human speculation, and your Redeemer an adventurer, who may or who may not fulfil the expectations he has raised, as shall hereafter be found convenient. There is not one of you who would not feel himself injured and insulted by the twentieth part of that mistrust in his truth, which he himself is habitually exercising, ('tis well that he does it ignorantly,) towards Jesus Christ.

But still, how is the fact to be explained? Very easily, though not very honorably, for those who furnish evidence of its existence. A neglect to cultivate grace already bestowed, opens the door of the heart to a multitude of those evil doubts. An untender walk—more according to the fashion of this world, than according to the will of God, than your duty, your privileges, your promises, your obligations to redeeming love, exact—grieves the good Spirit of God; mightily shakes your hope; and brings your souls into bondage and terrors. A guilty conscience and a settled peace, or an unbending faith, cannot dwell together in the same bosom. Omissions of known duties—of opportunities of serving and honoring our Master, when fairly put in our way—do naturally and necessarily invite his rebuke. We cannot expect to enjoy the comforts of faith, while the uses for which it was given are unfaithfully overlooked.

But that which is the most common and extensive cause of the criminal state and temper exhibited by the Christian community, in the article of their confidence before God, is *walking by sight, and not by faith*. Christians are formed for an immortality of action, blessedness, and glory, in a future state and a better world. Earth has no principles from which to draw any conclusions, about the employments or pleasures of heaven. The philosopher and the clown; the men of large or of little acquaintance with human nature; the most refined reason and the most gross, are alike ignorant and foolish on this point. We know nothing at all but what God has been pleased to tell us. And he has told us no more than is absolutely necessary for our present

Christian being. *Thus saith the Lord*; contains the ground of all our convictions, the elements of all our reasonings, upon the approaching condition of the just. We must take his word for every thing; and take it solely because he hath said it. Yet our principal concern in this world is with the invisible realities of the next, and with those affections, principles, and habits, which are linked in with them, by a continuity of existence; which are the great preparatives for them; and are nurtured, and strengthened, by means and influences as much depending upon our *faith*, as is our interest in the realities themselves.

Now it is perfectly evident, that a life of mere sense, such a life as is common to men who pretend to nothing more than sense can give them, is utterly hostile to the Christian's hope and calling. And yet what do we see, I do not say among those who *profess*, but among those who, we must hope, *experience* the faith of God's elect? What, but an incessant contradiction to their heavenly vocation? They believe strongly, when all their sensations go on comfortably. But the instant any thing happens to disturb these sensations, their faith and their confidence flag. It is all well so long as they *feel* comfortably: but the moment any thing untoward happens to their bodily perceptions—if they do not feel well—if their health is disordered—if their spirits are depressed—if the east wind affects their nerves—melancholy forebodings invade them; their past experience is all a delusion; their hope vanishes; despair fills their minds: and so the whole of their confidence turns out to be something which depends upon their physical health, or some accidental circumstance. Do you call this believing on the Son of God? Does his faithfulness rest upon the fickleness of your frame? Or is he to be insulted with your doubts, whenever the mechanism of your body is disturbed? Nay, if you ask for better assurance than his words of promise—if that will not fortify you against the ills of life and death—if you have not learned, with the father of the faithful, against hope to believe in hope, “not staggering at the promise of God through unbelief,” make thorough work of it; cast away his name, his badge, and his livery; take all the comfort that sense can bring you; but do not, whatever else you pretend to, do not set up for a believer in Jesus Christ.

Yet to those who can and do trust the faithful Saviour and his unaltering word, I say, Fear not. Your Lord will perfect that which concerneth you. Your interests are infinitely safe. Your small concerns, as you may account them, are bound up with him in the bundle of everlasting memory; and will no more be forgotten, than the concerns of a world. However seemingly worthless your deposit, he will remember it to your unspeakable joy. Give then your fears to the winds. Order all your doubts to be gone. And let the gracious emotion pass from heart to heart, till the shout of confidence shall drown the voice of repining; and the world and the church shall be surprised with the triumph of that song; *I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, until that day.* AMEN.

THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR ORIGINAL

MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY
AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.
NEW-YORK.

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."—*Isa.* lii. 8.

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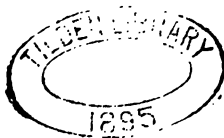
Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 29th day of May, A. D. 1895, in the fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Austin Dickinson, of the said District, hath deposited in this (L. S.) office the title of a Book, or Periodical Work, the right whereof he claims as Editor and Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“The National Preacher: or Monthly Sermons from Living Ministers. Edited by Rev. Austin Dickinson, New-York.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to an act, entitled “An Act, supplementary to an act, entitled An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

JAMES DILL,
Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.



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By GARDINER SPRING, D.D.

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WEALTH A FEARFUL SNARE TO THE SOUL.

MARK, x. 23.—*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

THIS extraordinary remark was made by our Lord to his disciples, on observing the conduct of the rich young man whom he had required to "sell whatsoever he had, and give to the poor." Though the individual he addressed was a moral and amiable youth, and thought he had already done what was necessary to secure the favor of God, yet "he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, because he had *great possessions.*" What a snare riches are to the soul! Jesus saw this truth painfully exemplified in the conduct of this young man, and he looked round about, and said to his disciples, "*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*" This poor man was "bound to destruction in fetters of gold."

Wealth does not, indeed, form an insurmountable obstacle to the possession of piety. If there were nothing to obstruct the salvation of the rich except their affluence; if there were no opposing heart to be overcome; the rich might be saved as easily as others. There are not wanting examples of piety among the affluent. Abraham and Job were rich, and David, Solomon, and Joseph of Arimathea were men of princely fortune, and yet were men of great devotedness to God. The Scriptures represent wealth, when used aright, as a distinguished blessing. It may, and ought to lead men near to God, instead of driving them far from him. But, while these facts show that it is not impossible for rich men to be pious, they do not invalidate the sentiment that there are serious difficulties in the way of their salvation. Among the obstacles which oppose themselves to the salvation of the rich, we may refer,

I. To the PRIDE OF LIFE.

The Scriptures speak of this as one of the most operative causes of human destruction. "The wicked, *through the pride of his countenance*, will not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts." It is recorded among the divine Proverbs, that "*pride* goeth before destruction, and a *haughty spirit* before a fall." God premonished Jerusalem of her danger from this same source—"Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, *pride and fulness of bread*." Jeremiah was deeply affected with this truth, and saw clearly how the pride of men prevented their repentance : hence he admonished them in the following strain of sympathy,—“If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your *pride* ; and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears.”

Pride is the eminence from which men more usually plunge into the fatal abyss. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places ; thou *castedst them down* into destruction." An inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem excludes God from the heart. It is a spirit diametrically opposite to all which the gospel requires, and therefore rejects the gospel salvation. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory." Those who fall in with the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, see their own sinfulness and ill-desert, renounce all reliance on their own goodness, give up their own selfish ends and advancement, and make the glory of God the paramount end of their being. But a lofty and proud spirit cannot stoop to a salvation so humiliating. So insensible is such an one of his guilt, and so boastful of his own goodness ; so reluctant is he to bow and submit to the Most High, that he will not come to Christ, even that he might have life.

And if this is the natural disposition of men, how much more deeply is it rooted in the hearts of the rich. There is every thing in the condition of an affluent man to foster and cherish his pride. The ease with which his desires are gratified, the obsequiousness which attends the fulfilment of his wishes, the decoration and show, the ostentation and splendor, which he imagines become his station, and which distinguish his person, his family, his dwelling, his business, and his enjoyments,—in one word, that "*pride of life*" which "is not of the Father but of the world," inflates his inconsiderate mind, insensibly puffs it up with notions of self-importance, and has a powerful, if not a fatal tendency to close every avenue of his soul, and banish from his mind every thought of God and eternity. The source of this superadded resistance to the gospel will be found in his wealth. When he turns his thoughts toward the obligations of religion, he has to struggle with difficulties, and often they are difficulties that discourage and overwhelm him. Poorer and

meaner men are more apt to see what little creatures they are, and to be weighed down under a sense of their insignificance and vileness. They feel as though it were wonderful mercy for the God of heaven to stoop to such sinners as they. But it is not apt to be so with the rich. "They are not in trouble like other men ; neither are they plagued like other men ; therefore *pride* compasseth them about as a chain, and violence covereth them as with a garment." Their *pride of life* is very apt to cherish itself into an habitual supremacy, to become the reigning and resistless motive by which they are actuated, and to enstamp upon them a perversity of character as insensible to the claims of piety, as it is sensible to the charms and splendor of the world.

II. Another difficulty, which opposes the salvation of rich men, is a **STRONG IMPRESSION OF THEIR PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE.**

Though men are absolutely dependent on God, and to a great extent on one another, there is in all a natural feeling of independence. There is nothing in which poor, dependent man glories more, than exemption from control. Where there is nothing to hold this sentiment in check, in the outward condition of men, it has a full and domineering ascendancy. And who does not see, that to whatever extent such a spirit bears sway, it is adverse to the spirit of the gospel ? One of the strong holds of the carnal mind is this unbending self-sufficiency. In nothing is the grace of God more signally triumphant, than in the subjugation of this very spirit.

Nor will it be denied, that *wealth* is very apt to foster this unseemly self-reliance, and this haughty contempt of God. When, therefore, you see a man who reluctantly admits the thought, that in God he lives and moves and has his being,—who revolts at the idea that he himself is God's property, and rigidly accountable to Him as his Great Superior ; when you see such a man claiming as his own large portions of this world's treasure ; you can see that riches are a snare to his soul. When you hear him say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years"—when he turns away from God and "says to the gold, thou art my hope, and to the most fine gold, thou art my confidence ;" when you see him repairing to his own resources always—to God never—you can feel how *hard it is* for such a man to enter into the kingdom of God. It was from the high elevation of his affluence and grandeur, that Pharaoh demanded, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey him." God once said to his ancient people, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear." Who is under so great temptations to withdraw his allegiance from God, as the man with whom every thing abounds in the present world ? How natural for one who rolls in splendor, and is clothed in

purple, and fares sumptuously every day, to live without ever thinking of God. The tide of worldly prosperity sets in with the strong current of his native alienation to God and holiness, and, unless a miracle of mercy prevent, bears him away. Such a man depends on his treasures, and not on God. The eternal God is not his refuge. He leans on earth. He maketh flesh his arm. His wealth is his strong city. And with what appalling obstacles, think you, must such a man contend, if he would come down to the conscious dependence of a little child upon the hourly visitations of his Father who is in heaven? How reluctantly is he brought to consider God as standing to him in the place of his wealth? What overwhelming difficulties must he remove, if he would avert the strength of his confidence from his possessions, and place all his safety and all his sufficiency in God? But,

III. Another difficulty which opposes the salvation of the rich is **THEIR ATTACHMENT TO THIS WORLD.**

How many would become pious and devoted men, were it not that they cannot give up the world! And how many, like the rich man in the Gospel, have had most pungent and solemn reflections; have made the most anxious inquiries relative to their salvation; have formed most salutary resolutions, and have become "almost Christians;" who, when they have learned that the indispensable condition of discipleship is a hearty renunciation of this world, have come to the affecting conclusion to choose this world as their portion, and have gone away from Christ, "because they had great possessions." "Covetousness is idolatry." There is no room in the heart for God, where it is pre-occupied by the world. The love, and worship, and service of God are excluded by the love, and worship, and service of another. The loyalty which belongs to God, is forcibly transferred to another sovereign. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is impossible to give this world and God the same and equal affections. It is impossible to be devoted to them both with the same ardor and faithfulness. There must be, at least, a secret preference of the one; so that if the love of the world has the ascendancy, the "love of God is not there."

And is it necessary to say, that of all the men who are peculiarly exposed to this ascendancy of worldly affection, they are the *men of wealth*? Grace not only can, but in many instances does, conquer the love of gold. But if it is true, that the more men possess the more they desire, then how very certain are the affluent to idolize their possessions? It is this supreme, inordinate love of the world that so exceedingly

endangers the spiritual interests of the affluent, and lays the foundation for that affecting appeal, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Mountains of difficulty have they to straggle with, who, in the earnest pursuit, or full enjoyment of affluence, would send forth their desires after God. While all their time, and talents, and inclinations are concentrated in the service of the world, where is the hopeful prospect, or even the encouraging probability, that they will suffer any diversion of their earnestness; or, if they should suffer it for a time, that it will be so permanently exclusive, as to become effectual to their salvation? When our Lord addressed this thought to his disciples, they felt its appropriateness, and, adverting to the dangers of the rich, exclaimed, "*Who then can be saved?*" Under a deep and impressive view of the hazardous condition of men so wedded to this world, it appeared to them that there was very little hope, where the natural worldliness of the heart was thus adventitiously augmented. Many a time have I watched the dangers of men in the full tide of worldly prosperity with an aching heart. Nor are they diminished by a deliberate and calm review of them. "Verily I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." We may remark,

IV. THE CARES AND PERPLEXITIES of the affluent constitute a most serious difficulty in the way of their salvation.

These worldly interests are the common plea of the young, and the excuse of those more advanced in years, for neglecting the concerns of the soul. And when the understandings of men have become enlightened, and their consciences penetrated with convictions, and they seem to be on their way to a better world, how many "draw back" through the pressure of worldly care! This was the case with a class of hearers referred to by our Lord in the parable of the sower. The seed of the word appeared to take root for a short season; but when the thorny cares of this world sprung up, they overpowered and choked the word, that it became unfruitful. And wherever you find the greatest amount of secular *care and solicitude*, there, rest assured, is the greatest danger of losing the soul. The thoughts are busied about other concerns; the time is occupied in other pursuits; the attention is wearied; the vigor of both body and mind is exhausted in business; and the whole soul so immersed in harassing avocations, that there is little opportunity to think, or read, or converse, or hear about spiritual and eternal things. And thus, in the midst of these conflicting claims, no place is found for the claims of religion. Eternity is forgotten, and the soul is lost!

Now, the pressure of this perplexity falls peculiarly upon two classes o.

men,—the rich and the poor,—but especially *the rich*. Rich men, with few exceptions, are men of calculation, business, and enterprise; and from the force of habit, are almost always pre-occupied in concerns remote from God and heaven. The society in which they move, the attentions they receive and pay, are well nigh a perpetual toil. And not unfrequently it costs more anxiety and effort to preserve, and watch, and foster, and use the treasures gained, than were expended in the gaining. And how shall such a man make his toils and perplexities a secondary concern, and subordinate to the care of the soul? It is no easy matter to break through the force of habit, and bid away from the mind the care and perplexity which the possession of wealth brings along with it, and with steadfastness of purpose and singleness of heart, bring an undivided solicitude to the business of religion. How many a man, recollecting for a moment the worth of his soul, and contrasting it with his coffers of gold, has felt, in the bitterness of his heart, that the treasures he fondly hoped would smooth his path, have left him not one hour of sweet tranquillity, and are “piercing him through with many sorrows?” Believe me, the chance is unutterably against such a man’s salvation. Engrossed in that abundance which God has given; having little or no time for calm and sober reflection; and surrounded by such powerful incentives to take refuge in the comforts and gayeties of this world;—“how hardly shall he enter into the kingdom of God?” But I will add,

V. Another difficulty in the way of their salvation is, that **THE BEST MEANS OF GRACE ARE RARELY USED WITH THE RICH AND AFFLUENT.**

God has formed no purpose to save any man irrespective of the appointed means. If there is any class of mankind, who, from their condition in society, are separated from the means of salvation, their doom is written in the fearful sentence, “Where no vision is, the people perish.” But rich men, as a class, are very apt to put themselves at a distance from the means of grace. You do not find the rich generally so well acquainted with the Bible as persons in more humble circumstances. If a poor man, or a poor family, or a poor neighborhood is destitute of the Scriptures, Christian benevolence will seek them out and supply their wants. But who distributes Bibles to the rich? Who gives Tracts to the rich? If the poor are uninstructed in religion, they are brought to the Sabbath School. But who searches out the children of the rich to teach them the way of life? If the poor are destitute of the preached Gospel, or if men in moderate circumstances are destitute of it, no inconsiderable interest will be excited to furnish them with supplies: but what man or set of men takes the same interest in behalf of the destitute rich?

Where the institutions of religion are stately enjoyed, is it not

a lamentable fact, that they are neglected more by the rich than by any other class, except the abject poor? Who absent themselves from the sanctuary, if not the rich and great of this world? It will not be denied, that those individuals and families, who are born and brought up in the more fashionable ranks of life, are greatly prone to neglect the duties of religion. I have often observed, too, that men who have been prospered in business, and raised from poverty to affluence, more generally evince an increasing disregard of religious institutions with the increase of their wealth.

Nor do the rich usually attend upon the most faithful ministrations of the Gospel. There is a wide difference in the instructions of the sanctuary, as they are presented by different teachers. By some the Gospel is exhibited in its native and self-denying, its heart-searching and soul-humbling power; while by others it is exhibited as a very accommodating concern, which troubles no man's conscience, and which disturbs no man's worldly views. It is not necessary to inquire which of these kinds of preaching constitutes the best adapted means of grace;—but on which do the gay and fashionable more generally give their attendance? A fashionable church is too apt to be but another name for a very smooth Gospel.

For myself, I must say, that in the course of my ministry, with few exceptions, I have not found the rich frequenting the weekly lecture and weekly prayer meeting. And how rarely are they seen in those humble dwellings where the Spirit of God so often meets two or three, who are gathered together in his name. When have you met them at the anxious meeting, or at the place for religious conversation? If a poor man, or a person in moderate circumstances, feels anxious for his soul, he will seek every opportunity to meet where Christians meet, and pray where Christians pray; he will converse with the minister, and attend every inquiry meeting. But O, how hard to bring the heart of a rich man to this humbling employment! He is ashamed to be thought solicitous for his soul; he will not place himself in the circle of anxious inquirers in seasons of the out-pouring of God's Spirit; and thus he declines some of the best means of salvation; and while men less elevated in society, cherish the strivings of God's Spirit, he grieves Him away, and goes down to hell.

And when ministers are roused with anxiety for the souls of their people, and testify the grace of God, not only publicly, but from house to house, whose door are they likely to pass? The door of poverty? No; the Gospel has a peculiar fitness to the wants of the poor, and he expects to see their humble cottage greet him

this with a smile. The door of undistinguished competency? No; this is the circle in which he himself moves, where he feels most at home, and where he expects to find every thing to revive his heart, and refresh his soul in the cheering successes of his labor. But it is that sumptuous dwelling, that pile of marble, so splendid without and so decorated within, that he passes without reluctance, from the chilling apprehension that no such errand of mercy, as that which guides his steps, would be welcome there. And though he may secretly reproach himself for the want of faithfulness, and criminate his own soul that he has not courage and self-denial to present all the interesting truths of the Gospel salvation to the affluent, and with all the argument he is capable of, and all the tenderness of expostulation he can call in to his assistance, and all the tones of solemn and affecting admonition that fall from his tongue under the roof of humble poverty, press home the everlasting obligations of piety; still the fact remains, that these are means rarely used with his affluent hearers.

There is another respect, too, in which the rich are sufferers. Ministers are not faithful with them in those few personal interviews on which they venture. They heal the rich, where they would probe the poor. They comfort and build up the rich, where they would distress and pull down the poor. They administer premature consolation, and cherish false hopes, and make hypocrites of the rich, where they would make converts of the poor. So hazardous is the condition of the rich in this particular, that multitudes of them have a name to live while they are dead. And it will be no alleviation of their eternal sorrows, that their blood is found on the skirts of ministers.

Nor are ministers alone unfaithful to the rich. Private Christians have no bowels of compassion for them. Who thinks of instructing them, and praying for them, and teaching them to pray? Many a devout mother in Israel, whose heart has been touched with pity for her perishing fellow-sinners, would venture on a visit of instruction to a poor neighborhood,—and often would her prayers ascend to God for them, while her modest spirit would shrink from such a visit of mercy to the abodes of affluence. You may see a collection of humble individuals engaged in religious conversation, and if a family *servant* should happen to enter the room, no one feels embarrassed, no one is alarmed; the conversation proceeds; and the poor servant is profited by it, and it issues in her salvation. But if some rich and distinguished personage should perchance obtrude upon their sacred familiarity, mark how every tongue is silent! None now can speak a word for Christ. The rich may not share in this spiritual repast. No; there is no mercy for the rich.

Bibles there are, and ministers there are, and tracts, and pastoral faithfulness, and prayers, and tender and solemn instructions there are, in a thousand forms for the poor; but the "poor rich" must remain unadmonished, and go down unpitied into hell.

Thus we see that scarcely any class of men are destitute of so many of the best means of salvation as the great and the affluent. There is pity for all others, and from all other classes the kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent take it by force; but, O! "how *hardly* shall they that *have riches* enter into that kingdom!"

And now from these views several reflections very naturally arise.

1. What melancholy evidence does this subject furnish of the *strange depravity of the human heart*. Why is it that the rich are so much more in danger of perdition than other men? Simply because they enjoy so much more of the divine goodness. Such is the tendency of the human heart under the reception of great and distinguished mercies, that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Men do not believe that they are so disaffected with God. But God has tried them in all places, at all times, and in all circumstances; and he has always found them disposed to evil. It is true of every man, in his unrenewed character, that he grows worse instead of better under all the divine favors. It is true of the poor, and more obviously true of the rich, because they enjoy and abuse so much more of the divine goodness. Men, families, and nations, who are destitute of religion, have increased in sin, as they have increased in wealth. They have employed the favors God has granted them, to promote their own selfish purposes. Their prosperity has given them both the disposition and the power to dishonor the God of heaven. And they have devoted it to this end. They have used it for themselves and against God. And what an expression and proof of the depravity of impenitent men does this single fact furnish! It may be doubted whether the universe furnishes stronger proof of the total sinfulness of the unrenewed heart than is found in the *present world*, where men sin so constantly against such expressions of the divine goodness. "I spake unto thee," says God, "in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear. *This has been thy manner from thy youth.*" "Let favor be shown to the wicked: yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and not behold the majesty of the Lord."

2. Let me say, *Do not envy the rich*. You recollect the sentiment of David, when he gave way to this sinful spirit: "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." And you recollect

how he was cured of this envy, when he considered the influence of wealth, on their spiritual character, and their final condition. "When I thought to know this," he says, "it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction." The poor cottager, with all his poverty and rags, whose daily bread is scarcely earned by the sweat of his brow, but whose piety spreads a charm around his humble dwelling, you may well envy; but not the rich worldling. Will you envy a man that which ensnares his soul?—which presents obstacles to his eternal salvation?—which throws mountains in his way to heaven? Were it as easy for the rich to enter into the kingdom of God, as for the poor, and did men increase in piety as they increase in riches, their allotment would be of the most enviable kind. But so long as it is a fact attested in the Bible, and confirmed by all experience, that rich men labor under great and peculiar disadvantages for securing salvation, who will grudge their possessions?—who will grieve at the sight of their treasures? If you are ever disposed to envy the great and affluent, and mourn that you may not shine in the circles of fashion, and be arrayed in splendor, and feast at luxurious banquets—if, with eager and unsatisfied desire, you cry, give, give, as you survey their treasures—reflect for one moment how these bar up their entrance to the kingdom of God—how they add fuel to their lusts, and furnish excitement to their pride—how they remove them far from the hopeful means of salvation, and often prove their sure passport to the gates of death. Then "fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Wealth is a privilege, when enjoyed and used as it should be. But I should be afraid to pray for wealth, either for myself or my children. If I knew I should devote it to God, I should be glad to possess it. But I do not know; and observation shows that large possessions are much more likely to injure and destroy us, than we ourselves are likely to devote them to God.

3. Our subject then admonishes us to *take care how we heap up riches*. What mean all this anxiety, and watchfulness, and effort, and bustle to lay up to yourselves treasures on earth? What doth it profit? It will give you the means of an independent subsistence; it will give you influence with your fellow-men; it may render thousands obsequious to your desires; but this is not all. It will inflate you with the pride of life; it will beguile you into a proud contempt of God; it will rivet your heart to earth; it will multiply the cares and embarrassments which detach your thoughts from eternity; it

will put you at a distance from some of the best means of salvation ; it will be an obstacle to your entrance into life eternal, which thousands have in vain attempted to surmount. Ah ! God has said, " they that *will be rich* fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition ;"—and will you *aim at riches* ? God has said, " the *love of money* is the root of all evil ; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows ;"—and will you still strive to be rich ? God has said, " it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven ;" and will you, after all, aspire to affluence ? Rather pray, " Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." We may devoutly seek a competency, but it is hazardous to seek more. God may say of us as he did of others, " Wherefore I gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." Should the providence of God defeat your pecuniary projects, it may be the greatest mercy. Set not your affections, therefore, on the earth, but on things that are above. You cannot be too ambitious of heavenly treasures. And you cannot seek them too soon. And to you who are young, O let me say, " seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Do not defer this momentous concern till you are rich. For the probability of your becoming the humble followers of Christ is less and less, as your wealth increases. I remark,

4. Our subject *affectionately addresses itself to the rich*. There are rich men now before me, some of whom are hopefully pious, and some of whom are fearfully impious. And let the rich man of piety remember, how great are his obligations to effectual grace, and what wonders grace can achieve, that can break through all the barriers which even affluence throws in its way, and all the flames which affluence enkindles around the soul, and snatch it as a brand from the burning. And beware, my friends, lest your riches cause you to depart from the Lord. Of all those who have hope towards God, the rich are most in danger of losing the savor and usefulness of piety, and of being scarcely saved. And that your riches may prove a blessing, and not a curse, " set not your hearts upon them"—" be not conformed to this world"—" use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." You are God's stewards, and must give account of your stewardship. How suitable, then, the injunction, " Charge them, that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in

the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ;—that they do good—that they be rich in good works—ready to distribute—willing to communicate :—laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

And to the rich who are not pious, let me say, respected friends, is there not fearful reason to apprehend, that you will never enter the kingdom of God ? Every thing is leagued against you. O, this pride of life—this forgetfulness of God—this confidence in riches—this incessant care and vexation—these golden treasures—how are they like a mill-stone about your neck, sinking you down to perdition ! But if you perish in the midst of mercies, is not the fault your own ? O tell me, will you perish, because God is kind ?—because he gives the means of great usefulness, as well as happiness ? It may be he is now saying, “*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*” It may be that conscience, the cries of humanity, the intimations of Providence, the mighty interests of the soul, demand a great sacrifice. If so, deny thyself. Be not “sad at that saying.” Obey God’s voice. For “what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?”

Finally, let me say to all, while you envy not the affluent, *study to do them good*. An appropriate tract, a faithful sermon, a religious periodical, a word fitly spoken, may be to them the message of eternal love ; and may give a new and heavenly direction to all their wealth and all their efforts. How exceedingly great, then, the guilt of neglecting those, whose souls are at least as precious as those of the poor, and whose *influence* may be a thousand fold more important. Say not then, in excuse for indolence or cowardice, that not many wise, mighty, or noble are called. For God hath expressly “chosen the weak things, to confound the things which are mighty.” In his hand the feeblest instrument is omnipotent ; and before his Spirit “the loftiness of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted.”

From the Quarterly Chr. Spectator.

“ WE do not hesitate to say, that Mr. Dickinson has adopted one of the happiest expedients hitherto devised, for eliciting that “ diversity of gifts” in the Christian ministry, which infinite wisdom and benevolence have bestowed for the edification of the body of Christ, and for bringing sinners to the foot of the cross.

“ A sermon that comes to us literally smoking from the press, is sure to be taken up with greater avidity, and to be read with more interest, than if it had lain upon the shelf in a large volume for several years, or even for a single month. When a book comes bound and lettered from the office of the publisher, it is new but once; when issued in the form of the *Monthly Preacher*, it is new twelve times, before the volume is completed.

“ A second and still greater advantage is, that a periodical Preacher is enabled to take up many important subjects, at the very moment when public inquiry is awake, and discussion is imperiously demanded. Of this we have some admirable examples in the work before us.

“ A third advantage is, that in the hands of a judicious and enterprising editor, a *Monthly Preacher* brings out talents, which would never venture of their own accord to encounter public observation; and thus, by stimulating retired and retiring members of the sacred profession to make unwonted efforts, it is instrumental in raising the standard of their ordinary ministrations, to the great and lasting advantage of their stated hearers.

“ A fourth advantage of a periodical Preacher, sustained as this is, lies in the great *variety* of ministerial gifts and talents, which it imbodyes. Every new sheet brings us, literally, a new writer, with all his peculiarities of style, thought, and illustration. Moreover, where thousands are to be instructed and edified, who differ so much from one another, as the patrons of the *National Preacher* do, in education, natural temperament, literary taste, habits of investigation, and compass of thought, the varieties of the north, the middle, and the south, cannot fail of being interesting and profitable in a high degree. We of this frosty climate, need to be warmed, occasionally at least, by more tropical fires; while our brethren nearer the sun, may, in their turn, be equally benefited by the bracing elements of these higher latitudes.

“ But the usefulness, after all, of a *Monthly Preacher* must depend upon its *character*; its soundness in the faith, its talent, its holy unction, and its general adaptation to the spiritual wants of the community.”

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THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LX.

Preached at Boston, by appointment, before the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Executive Council and Legislature of Massachusetts, at the Annual Election, May 27, 1829.

BY WILLBUR FISK, A.M.

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I PETER, iv. 7.—*But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

THE circumstances of the public religious teacher are unlike those of most public speakers. These, in most cases, have their subjects specifically marked, and their topics of discourse distinctly proposed. Not so the gospel minister. He has indeed but one object in view,—the moral and religious improvement of his hearers; but to accomplish this object, he may draw his materials from heaven, earth, and hell. Like the great apostle to the gentiles, he determines to know but *one thing* among the people—“Jesus Christ and him crucified:”—but around this proposition, as a common nucleus, gather all the truths of revealed religion. This contains in itself, directly or impliedly, all the doctrines and precepts, the admonitions and promises, of the Bible. In one discourse, however, but a small portion of this vast field can be brought into view. Hence the necessity of selecting such a portion as is best adapted to the circumstances of the audience addressed. The question then arises,—What subject is best suited to this audience? To answer this question satisfactorily, we must inquire, what is the design of a religious discourse and devotional exercises on an occasion like this? Is it a mere indication that the Christian religion is recognised in the principles of our government, and by the great body of our citizens, and therefore, when we induct men into the principal offices of the State, God and his religion must have a passing compliment? If this were all, then the shorter this compliment, the better; and the subject selected, and the time occupied, should be such as would least divert attention from the civic honors and ceremonies of the day. But this is not all:—the reason of these religious exercises is founded in the relation of man to God—in his known proneness to forget God, and in the evident need of religious influence and Divine aid in the responsible duties of administering civil government. Hence the object should be to impress deeply upon the memory and upon the heart, the principles and obligations of our holy religion. While the flag of our country is waving in the breeze, and the rush and the acclamations of thousands give interest and animation to the occasion, it is very proper that the banner of the cross should also be unfurled, the voice of the multitude be hushed, and the civil ceremonies suspended, that we may

gather around the altar of God, to acknowledge, "Thou God seest us," to learn our dependence, and to become deeply impressed with our high responsibility to the court of Heaven. It is for this end that your speaker claims the attention of this audience—claims it not that he, or those of his profession, may share in the political honors of the republic, but that the civil officers of the commonwealth may share in the wholesome instructions and binding motives of the gospel he preaches. The more common course pursued on such occasions is, to point out the duties and qualifications of rulers, and to descant on the blessings of a good government, and the freedom and prosperity of our public institutions. These are appropriate, but they are already better understood than the means by which they are secured, or the motives by which they are enforced. That preaching which is merely didactic, under such circumstances as the present, and before men who know their duty so well, if it should not be actually tedious and irksome, promises little profit. If this audience should be told, that rulers must be good men, "fearing God and hating covetousness," that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," that in proportion as men are high in office, their example and influence will be more extensively felt, and that therefore they owe it to their country and their God, to be upright and virtuous,—all this would be important truth, but it might not, under existing circumstances, be the most profitable. To cure the evils of life, and to promote righteousness among men, the work should be commenced at the proper place, and be enforced by proper motives. The religion of the Bible aims at the inner man, and wars with the elements of moral evil in the heart, where alone they can be successfully combated. And to do this effectually, it arrays the transient character of earth and earthly objects, in striking contrast with the eternal and immutable realities of the world to come. "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." This discipline of the inner man, and these more than earthly reasons that enforce it, are both brought into view in the text,—"*Be ye sober and watch unto prayer,*" for "*the end of all things is at hand.*"

We first notice the duty enjoined. It must be acknowledged that an attention to the outward conduct is important, because it is by this that we fulfil the various duties which grow out of the relations we stand in to each other. God alone, directly and clearly reads the heart, and the moral evils there concealed are offensive only to Him. If, therefore, there were no connexion between the heart and the life, with the sinfulness of the former, men, in their various relations to each other, would have nothing to do. But since it is from "the abundance of the *heart* that the mouth speaketh," and since "out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies," it is evident that it is with the heart principally we have to do—especially when we would restrain vice or promote virtue. As teachers of morality and religion, we should have the same regard to the outward conduct that physicians have to symptoms. These show the kind and the malignity of the disorder, but are not the disorder itself. The remedy therefore is to be applied, not to the symptoms, but to the disease. Cure the latter, and the former will cease of course. **But you cannot cure the disease by an application of the remedy to the symp-**

toms. It is for this reason that the requirements of the divine law are truth in the inward parts, and gospel remedies strike at the very root of sin. To regulate the life, therefore, and to qualify the man for all the duties of life, there must be a moulding of the *heart*,—a fashioning of the soul to *sobriety*, *circumspection*, and *devotion*. And this is what is enjoined in the text. Indeed the requirements of the text imply the whole of a religious character; and very distinctively mark the difference between *him that serveth God*, and *him that serveth him not*: for they have respect unto the judgment and the affections, unto the temper of the mind and the exercises of the heart; and inculcate a vigilant and an untiring energy, that guards against the corruption of the one, or an alienation of the other. He who is but slightly acquainted with his own heart, or has marked with any attention the prevailing character of man, knows well the proneness of the heart to become supremely attached to the world, and wholly engrossed with the concerns of time. Almost all the evils which cluster around the soul, or disparage the life, are engendered here. And he alone is cured of this idolatry of the heart, whose prudent mind puts a sober and judicious estimate upon the things of earth, and restrains the passions and appetites within temperate and reasonable bounds. But however well disciplined the soul may be; however subdued the passions; however sound the judgment, or regular the life; yet in this contagious and infectious world, the sober mind may become perverted; and therefore *watchfulness* is one of the leading characteristics of true religion. The spirit of irreligion is heedless of the errors, and reckless of the dangers, to which the soul is exposed—slothful and self-confident, it keeps no guard against the world, the flesh, and satan. The spirit of true religion is the reverse of all this; it is wary and guarded against temptation. Under its influence the heart is kept with all diligence,—every avenue to the soul is guarded, and every sense is awake to duty, and to the coming of Christ

The spirit of irreligion is the spirit of pride, of self-dependence, and of forgetfulness of God. Humble adoration and sincere worship are not in accordance with the spirit of the world. It is said of Saul of Tarsus, by the Holy Spirit, to remove the doubts of one who justly suspected his character, "Behold, he prayeth;" as if this were enough to prove him a sincere Christian. But had he never prayed before? In the forms of prayer he had doubtless often engaged. And so have many worldly men—and have even thought themselves devout, perhaps, while they had at heart the same kind of opposition to Jesus of Nazareth with Saul of Tarsus. Never, till he saw his heart and felt his sin, could it be truly said of Saul, Behold he prayeth! And so of all others. The spirit of prayer, therefore, very clearly designates the spirit of true religion. He who feels it, has contrition for sin, gratitude for mercies received, adoration and humble veneration for the character of God, supplication for needed blessings, and submission of himself and all his interests into the hands of God.

From this concise view of the subject it appears, that the qualities and exercises of heart required in the text are the grand features and distinguishing marks of the truly pious. And such as they are at heart, such they will be in their outward walk. Hence we may understand the apostle as

saying—Be ye holy in heart and life, be ye the humble worshippers and faithful servants of the most High God, watching against sin and over your own hearts and lives with all caution and diligence, that ye may thereby secure a treasure and an inheritance beyond the bounds of time and of earth; and so much the more because time and all its interests, earth and all its concerns, are coming to a speedy end.

Our next object will be to show, how the consideration that the end of all things is at hand, is suited under all circumstances, to make the mind *sober*, *watchful*, and *prayerful*.

On the subject of the dissolution of the world there is doubtless much skepticism in the minds of many. It is still asked, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning?" That the earth has never been dissolved is no argument, however, that it never will be. But rather because we are told by the word of God it will be, and as yet it never has been, the event is therefore to be expected. And even the changes that have taken place are strong indications that there may be other great changes in the present constitution of things. We are informed in sacred history, and this is corroborated by ancient tradition, and by the present state of the earth, that this world, as it once existed, was overflowed by water and perished. And this is produced as analogical proof, by the inspired author of our text, that "the heavens and earth which are now, are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." "For the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up:" Yea, "all these things shall be dissolved." And it is not certain that the established laws of nature need be reversed to accomplish this dissolution. Astronomers tell us of comets which threaten at some future day to approach so near the earth, as finally to be attracted to it with a force that may shatter it to its centre, and with a heat that may dry up its waters, melt down its mountains, and utterly consume it, as the fire from Heaven consumed the altar and sacrifice of Elijah. Philosophy teaches that a latent fire pervades all matter, which, of itself, if liberated, would be sufficient to wrap this globe in one universal conflagration; as also of an electric fluid or ethereal fire, that may be called into operation, and made to "pass through the aqueous particles of the atmosphere, and produce innumerable explosions—frequent, loud, confounding, and terrific, beyond every comprehension but that of God himself." How exactly does this answer to the prophetic description of the apostle; "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise." These elements now occasionally break out, as if impatient of restraint; and should they all, or any one of them, be once brought into general action, the work of dissolution is accomplished. But in whatever way the event is brought about, we are taught to expect it; and with it, there are results and consequences that seriously affect the interests of the human family and demand our careful and solemn attention.

1. The sublimity and grandeur of this scene are, of themselves, suited to draw off the mind from earth and impress it with sentiments of sobriety and

awe. The resurrection of the dead, the gathering of the nations, the rocking of the world and its conflagration, the explosions and intonations of the atmosphere, the warring and wild uproar of the elements, "the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," all unite to make this a scene of inconceivable sublimity. One single feature in this grand exhibition will far exceed all the events and ceremonies which in this world appear so imposing. What is the inauguration of a President, or the coronation of an Emperor, compared with the coronation, on that day, of one of the least in the kingdom of Heaven? What is the mustering of armies, compared with the assembling of all the generations of men, both of the quick and the dead? What is the roar of cannon, or the eruption of the volcano, compared with the shaking and melting down of this terraqueous globe? Man is susceptible of moral impressions, from the contemplation of grand and sublime objects. Whether this moral influence is direct, or through the association of ideas, it matters nothing to the present argument. The fact admitted, it follows that the impression made and the moral effect produced, will correspond with the character of the object contemplated and the light in which it is viewed. Whatever therefore is imposing in earthly exhibitions is apt to dazzle the mind and captivate the heart. Hence, we see sedate age and buoyant youth, the intelligent and the ignorant, rushing on to such scenes, to see the gathering, and hear the shouts, and witness the ceremonies. And the more splendid they appear, the more the heart of the charmed beholder becomes attached to the earth, as the seat of every thing interesting and desirable. All the sensations that are raised by these earthly scenes are earthly; they feed earthly affections, excite ambitious hopes, and strengthen the whole train of worldly feelings. To counteract these, and to call the soul away from earth, what is better suited than the consideration of the closing scene of time and the attendant circumstances? How trifling would the grandest scenes of earth appear amidst those contemplations that make the soul familiar with the coming of the King of kings in the clouds with power and great glory, the descending of the New Jerusalem from God out of heaven, the acclaim of the heavenly hosts, the confusion of dissolving elements, and the glare of a burning world!

2. This leads to another view of the subject, closely connected with the foregoing. It has been already assumed, and no evidence need be adduced to prove the assumption, that the root of sin, and that from which spring forth the various branches of a sinful life, is an inordinate attachment to this world. This attachment stands opposed to all holiness; for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The strength of this love can only be rated by the force with which it impels the soul forward in its earthly pursuits. The objects presented seem so desirable, that the pursuer is not scrupulous about the means of obtaining them. Trifling deviations from rigid virtue are at first indulged; afterwards, still greater departures, until crimes of the deepest dye are perpetrated. Are the honors and offices of the world presented as objects of pursuit? What tricks of electioneering are resorted to; what

questionable strokes of policy, what time-serving, what misrepresentations, envyings and strifes are produced; and all this too among honorable men! Is wealth the object of pursuit? The man's haste to be rich destroys his innocency: and so of all the other unholy passions. And in vain will you attempt to hedge in the soul, and prevent its breaking over due bounds to secure its object. So long as hope promises, and the crown glitters, the love of having and the desire of enjoying will urge their gratification, with an irresistible influence; virtue fades, conscience is smothered, and all the moral feelings are blunted or perverted.

It gives us pleasure indeed to be able to state, that many men who are not under the immediate and controlling influence of heavenly affections, are nevertheless far from having arrived to the point of depravity just alluded to. But this makes nothing against the argument. The tendency is to this; and where worldly motives prevail, this will be the result. When a man's principles and conduct are guarded only by worldly motives, what guaranty have we that he will give due heed to the principles of moral integrity? It may be considered as an axiom in morals, that undue and unholy attachments lead to undue and unholy means of gratification. When, therefore, the spirit and love of the world sway the mind, who can tell where the erring principles of the soul will be stayed? "Every man, when he is tempted, is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed; then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Under this influence, the mind cannot be approached by the sober truths of the gospel, nor affected by the feelings of devotion, until these prospects are blasted, or their fancied brightness obscured. Here therefore, we see the need of the motives in the text; and the connexion these motives have with the object to be gained. The object to be gained is purity of heart and purity of life. Against this the world opposes its influence. Its honors dazzle, its riches allure, its pleasures invite, its prospects promise; and however deceitful and unsubstantial all these are in fact, yet, by the magic of a sinful delusion, they appear to the mind appareled in inexpressible loveliness. If the delusion remains unbroken, who can withstand it? Vain is the attempt to fortify the mind and strengthen the moral powers of the soul. The power that draws the soul to earth is irresistible, until the attractive influence is broken: and this can only be done by showing the man the unsubstantial and valueless character of the phantom he is pursuing. He must be made to see and feel, that "the end of all these things is at hand,"—that we all do fade as a leaf, and the glory of man is as the grass that withereth, and the flower that falleth off;—yea, that nature herself is doomed to dissolution, and that the throne of man's highest elevation is crumbling to dust. And when once the mind is impressed with these sentiments, the principal barrier to a sober, watchful and prayerful life will be removed, and the way will be prepared to admit the purifying influence of high and heavenly motives. Hence,

3. The consideration urged in the text is suited to lead the mind to moral purity, because closely connected with the dissolution of the world, is the expectation of the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness abundantly to accord with all consistent ideas of the

divine economy, and with the scriptural account of the subject, that when this earth shall be burned up, and the heavens which now are shall pass away with a great noise, there will be, as respects man, a new constitution of things. There shall be, we are told, "new heavens and a new earth," which shall be emphatically and universally "a habitation of righteousness." And there, saith an apostle, "will be the city of the New Jerusalem, and among the habitations of men shall be the tabernacle of God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." This description, than which nothing is more simple or more expressive, brings into view objects that are suited to arrest the attention and engage the affections, when they are taken off from this world. And this is all-important. For it is essential to the soul that it love something, or be utterly miserable. Its guilt, therefore, is not that it *loves*, but that it loves wrong objects. Of course the affections are not to be destroyed, but transferred. It accords therefore with sound philosophy, that when the affections are to be separated from earthly objects, they are to be invited to higher and nobler attachments. And this is precisely the philosophy of the Bible. The same inspired prediction which blots out one world, creates another; and the same authority which prohibits placing affections on things on the earth, directs to place them on things above. If earthly crowns are fading, nevertheless there is a crown that fadeth not: though riches make to themselves wings and fly away, yet there are durable riches and an incorruptible inheritance; and though the pleasures of life are deceitful and transient, yet at God's right-hand are pleasures for evermore. Thus at the very time the soul is called off from objects in their nature defiling, it is brought into connexion with those which are purifying. For, while on the one hand it is impossible for the heart to be attached to this earth supremely, without cherishing pride and vain ambition, and all that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish," so when by a view of the certain and speedy destruction of this mundane system, the soul is induced to turn its attention and fix its affections on things which are above, the influence is most salutary;—it draws around the heart every thing virtuous and noble, and the soul, by its association with whatsoever things are true, pure, lovely and of good report, is changed into the same image, and becomes imbued with that wisdom which is from above, "which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

This connexion of the soul with such elevating and purifying associations must also have a most salutary influence upon the *life*; not only because, as we have seen, these associations, in their very nature, tend to counteract that narrow selfishness so natural to the earthly mind, and to mould the soul into an expansive and heavenly benevolence, but also because all the motives to encroach upon the rights of others, are hereby removed, and every inducement to do good to our fellow-men is brought into view. For in the objects of affection and pursuit here presented, there are no conflicting interests, and therefore no occasion for competition. The elevation of one is no cause of the failure of another;—hence there is no ground for envying, reviling, and

revenge. There are honors, riches, pleasures, mansions, crowns and thrones for all ; and the more virtuous and beneficent they are, the more secure the reward, and the richer the inheritance.

4. These thoughts are closely connected with another consideration, which deserves distinct and particular notice. The text implies that at, and after, the destruction of the world, man will have a conscious state of being, and a state too, on which his present character and conduct will have a decisive influence. Otherwise the apostle's argument would be futile and childish. For why should he urge sobriety, circumspection, and prayer, from the motive that all things were coming to an end, if the duties here enjoined had no bearing upon our future state? And the same may be asked of other passages. "Seeing," saith another text, "all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" And again,—“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” At that day, we are taught, the wicked shall perish ; “for the heavens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” Yea, it is when “the heavens and the earth flee away, so that there is found no place for them, that the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.” And this idea, so frequently presented in the Bible, is confirmed by reason and the fitness of things. Separate time from its connexion with eternity, and it becomes an unmeaning point. What are all its relations and duties, its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears? But join time with eternity, and connect them by those ties which grow out of responsibility and retribution, and every thing appears consistent and rational. God himself has attached great importance to this earth and its inhabitants. He has displayed, by its creation, his eternal power and godhead. He has thrown up its mountains in majesty, and spread out its valleys in beauty, and fitted it up with wondrous accommodations for the residence of man. And he has attached additional importance to our existence here, by providing for our moral discipline. To this end all his providences are directed, and all the revelations of his will. He has given a law to his creatures, and his concern for their obedience is manifested in all the encouragements and promises, the cautions and threatenings of the Bible ; and especially in all the provisions of the gospel. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Now why this preparation? why this discipline? why this care and solicitude manifested for man in his present state of existence? We can account for it on no other principle, than that much is depending upon this portion of existence, much that is of vast moment to the soul, and much that will not be fully disclosed, until that day when “the earth and all things that are therein, shall be burned up.” Then shall it be seen, why heaven's King wept over the rebellious and incorrigible, and why heaven's hosts rejoice over repenting sinners. For then those “that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt ; and they that

be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Then shall the evidences of the past be examined, and the destinies of the future be unfolded, and then shall it be clearly seen, why this life, short as it is, and why this world, in itself so unsubstantial and fading, should nevertheless have attached to them such a weight of importance, and draw around them such an eternity of interest.

It is evident, from the foregoing considerations, that this earth is only a theatre, on which the Almighty and the Allwise exercises his subjects awhile, to try their fidelity and test their love ; and that this life is only a day of grace through Christ, and of moral discipline, preparatory to a more permanent state of being. Whenever, therefore, we are urged to a virtuous and holy life by the argument, that "the end of all things is at hand," we are expected to take into view the consequences to ourselves, connected with this event. How important is it, therefore, that we inquire seriously,—where shall we be, and what *our* condition, amid "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds?" This inquiry the Scriptures have answered, and answered too, in a manner to give full force and influence to the foregoing argument. "For if God spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly," then, indeed, he "knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Here is the grand lever of Scripture motives ; and the fulcrum on which it rests is placed far beyond the range of time, and the bounds of a dissolving world. Here it *should* rest, and *thence* must be derived the power that moves it. For none but such a power can counteract the gravitating influence of earth, and give to the affections a high and holy elevation.

It is on the ground of the close connection of our conduct here, with the moral consequences connected with the dissolution of the world, that it could in truth be said, when these words were first penned, and to all the generations since, "The end of all things is *at hand*." For although many generations have passed away since that period, and the end is not yet, still the relation between the termination of life and the end of the world, is so intimate, that the consequences of the one are, in point of fact, the consequences of the other. Or more properly, the latter will be the period when the character which has been forming in life and is finished at death, will be fully developed and adjudged. The evidences on which this trial shall proceed, and the decision be grounded, may have been sealed up for centuries ; still as they are taken and reserved in special reference to that event, the mind is constantly cited to that period, as the one in which the character of each shall pass the test, and his destiny be fixed. And this character is soon to be finished ; so that all that is interesting and momentous to any man, all that can affect his weal or wo, in relation to that or any future event, will, in a short time, be accomplished. Yea, it is probable, that, immediately upon the death of the body, the departed spirit enters into such a meditation of the past, and contemplation of the future, as will be preparatory to, and almost a participation of, the final decision. So that, in fact, the circumstances

which relate to that event, which render it greatly to be desired, or awfully to be dreaded, will at death crowd around the soul, and infix their thrilling pleasures, or poignant pangs, with such certainty of anticipation, as to render the whole, not only in its preparatory process, but in its almost opening realities, already begun. Well, therefore, in relation to the moral consequences to the soul, may it be said to every successive generation, "The end of all things is at hand."

And well may this subject be urged, to wean the soul from earth, and raise it to higher attachments and nobler pursuits. To believe and to feel these truths would be our salvation;—to doubt them is our ruin. The more, therefore, the pursuits of men are calculated to sensualize the mind, the more engrossing their cares, and the more winning and fascinating the events that pass around them, the more earnestly should it be proclaimed in their hearing, "*The end of all things is at hand.*" And perhaps there is no situation in which man can be placed, where the mind is more liable to be engrossed with something short of the realities of eternity, than amid the busy cares and flattering honors of public life. This proclamation, therefore, should be made in our legislative halls, in our courts of justice, and in our popular assemblies, until it shall have sobered all the levities, and chastened all the excesses, and humbled all the aspirations of this erring life.

To damp our earthly joys,
 To increase our gracious fears,
 For ever let the Archangel's voice
 Be sounding in our ears.

Is it whispered that such thoughts may be intruded unseasonably upon the mind? We answer—No! never! never! What is designed to influence the whole life, and indeed to have bearing upon a whole eternity, should be always present. If at one time more than another, some wish to forget it, this is the time when, and these are the persons to whom, this subject should be especially presented. And if there are any who read, in the dissolution of the world, the destruction of their joys and the annihilation of their hopes, and to whom, therefore, this theme may be gloomy and unwelcome, such feelings clearly indicate that they, of all others, need to have it pressed upon them. For they are the ones whose hearts are not right with God. If their treasure were in heaven, and their hearts there, no such gloom would hang over this subject.

Neither should this subject be dispensed with, though some should be skeptical, and doubt the coming of such an event. So it has ever been with the world, in relation to the threatened judgments of God. He has given timely warning; but the transgressor has often doubted till he was ruined. God warned the inhabitants of the old world, before the deluge; he warned the inhabitants of Sodom and the cities of the plain, before their dreadful overthrow; he warned the Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem; but all these warnings were disregarded as idle tales. *They ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, they bought and sold, planted and builded, until the flood, the fire, and the enemy destroyed them all. One event remaineth*

one awful and final catastrophe!—long predicted, often alluded to, and delayed only, until the fulness of time shall come. But it will come, and will not tarry. “For the heavens and the earth shall perish, yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shall God change them, and they shall be changed.” But God endureth for ever, and his word shall never fail. “He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering towards our world, and not willing that any should perish.” It is for this cause that he delayeth, and sendeth his word and his messengers, to warn the sons of men of their danger and to hasten them to their duty. And shall we doubt and perish? Must our ruin be the only evidence that will convince us? Shall we, like those of old, *eat and drink, build and plant, buy and sell*—shall we seek honor and pleasure, wealth and office,—thoughtless of the future, and reckless of our danger, until we see “our God in grandeur and our world on fire?” O what is man! how slow in heart to believe, how dull in feeling, not to tremble at the threatened judgments of the Almighty! “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.” Then would they become emulous of a crown that fadeth not, and of a throne that crumbleth not, and of pleasures at God’s right hand for evermore.

But I am admonished that it is time to come to the accustomed congratulations of the occasion, and so conclude.

His Excellency the Governor, and the other officers and members of the Executive and Legislative Departments, will accept our cordial felicitations for the honors conferred on them by the free suffrages of an enlightened people. Of all offices in the world, those conferred thus, and under such circumstances are the most desirable and the most flattering. We love and respect the rulers of our own choice; and we doubt not but such rulers love and respect us. We are yours, and you are ours: Strong and endearing ties! Well may it be said of such, at least so far as the political interests of our country are concerned,—Happy rulers, over a happy people! But while I am permitted thus publicly to be the organ of these congratulations, you will suffer me, I doubt not, to present them in full view of the preceding subject, and of the need you have, for all the motives here furnished, to enable you amidst the cares and honors of public life, to be sober, watchful, and prayerful. For the more interesting and honorable your relations to society, the greater your danger of being too much engrossed by them. Faithfulness and diligence in the duties of your respective offices do indeed become you; nor are you required to be indifferent to the confidence, honors, and affection of your fellow-citizens. Our fault is not, that we feel an interest in the duties and concerns of time, but that this interest is not always regulated by a regard to the connection of time with eternity. Who would build the temple of his fame, and the palace of his pleasures, on the sand? Yet he builds thus, who loves the world for its own sake. But if, through all the relations and duties of time, you feel and act with due respect to the events of the *great day*, then will you fill up your respective spheres, with pleasure, with interest, and with integrity; and in the end it shall be said to each of you—*Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

SERMON LXI.

BY JUSTIN EDWARDS, D.D.

BOSTON, MASS.

I PETER, IV. 7.—*But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

It is one of the striking evidences of human depravity, and of its power over the mind, that men can live as if they were at home in this world, and confine their views, affections, and efforts, to the objects of time. It would seem, at first, to be impossible, that rational creatures, born for immortality, and whose happiness to endless ages depends upon placing their affections on things above, should be able to confine them to things below; especially after God has told them, that *the end of this is death.*

But we know from observation that they can do it, and from woful experience that they love to do it. Although admonished by the pains which they feel in their own bodies, by the warning voice of conscience, the testimony of dying friends, and the declarations of the Holy Ghost, that they have no abiding place on earth, still they seek this world as their chief good; and not unfrequently they continue to do this till the last hour of life, and neglect the great salvation till their souls are lost for ever.

But they can never say that they do this without warning. God has told them, *the time is short*; and they *know not what a day may bring forth.* “The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

The end here spoken of, some have supposed to be the end of the Jewish nation, when their city and temple were destroyed, and eleven hundred thousand were swept into eternity. But it more naturally leads our minds to the end of the world; when, not a temple, or a city merely, but the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth, and all that is in it, be burnt up, and the scenes of time be swallowed up in an opening and boundless eternity.

Although it may be ages before this shall take place, yet, compared with eternity, *it is at hand.* All the time between this and the end of the world, when it is past, will look like a dream when one awakes.

But the end to *you*, my hearers, and to *me*, is much nearer than this. All the concern that we shall ever have with things below, is confined to the time in which we live. And what is your life? A vapour, which appears, and vanishes away. And must we at death drop all connection with things below? Surely, then, *the end is at hand.* I shall, therefore,

I. Illustrate this truth; and,

II. Point out the duties to which it calls us.

1. A thing is said to be at hand, when it is so near that we can reach it; or so near that it may come on us, or we may meet it, at any time. In this sense, the end of all things is at hand. It is so near that it may meet us at any time. Wherever we go, whatever we do, when we lie down, and when we rise up, when we go out, and when we come in, the next thing may be, the end. *There is not a moment of life in which we are not exposed, without warning, to meet death.* Even if we have laid out plans for years, and are engaged in

them with all the heart, still we may be called to leave them, just where they are, for other hearts to enjoy, and other hands to accomplish. You may have known a man with fair opening prospects, perhaps he had bought him a farm, and begun to make great improvements; or had built him a house, and expected soon to occupy it, and find a settled habitation; or he had engaged in merchandise, and laid the foundation for long and prosperous business; he intended to prosecute it for years before he should close his concerns; his treasures were wafted by every wind, and his agents were seen in every clime; but suddenly his business stopped; his plans were broken; the end had come, and the man was a corpse. Even if he had done nothing to prepare for death, and it was certain, should he then die, that he would sink to perdition, still he could not stop a moment; prepared or unprepared, he must go, and enter upon the endless retributions of eternity. Ah! he should have watched, and laid up his treasure in heaven; then he had been ready; and when absent from the body, he had been present with the Lord, beholding his glory and rejoicing in his love.

I once saw an infant smiling in its mother's arms; she rocked it in her cradle; and her heart leaped for joy as she thought how it would soon delight her with its half-formed accents, and be the solace of her heart for many future years; but the hand of death touched it, and her hopes, and her infant, sunk together into the grave! Have pity upon her, O ye her friends, have pity upon her, for the hand of the Lord hath touched her.

Your child perhaps lived till he could surprise and delight you with his opening and vivid intelligence; and by presenting every day some new attraction, bind a new cord around your heart; but a fall, or a fever, the fire, or the water, or some other messenger of the Lord, broke all asunder, and there was a wound which nothing but the balm in Gilead, and the Physician there, could heal.

Your neighbor's child lived till he had risen, perhaps, to manhood, and engaged in the active concerns of life. It may be he had freighted a vessel, and gone to a distant country; and after years of painful absence, his friends were expecting his return. Their hearts leaped for joy as the vessel approached; they hastened down to meet him; but, ah! he was gone;—the end had come; and they shall never more behold him, till the last great day. No age, no condition, no prospects, keep off death. With regard to every individual, *the end of all things is at hand*. I shall now, therefore,

II. Point out the duties to which the subject calls us: "Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer."

1. *Be ye sober*. This applies to the body, and to the mind. It means, abstain from outward dissipation, and from inward idolatry. Let your appetites, your passions, and your affections, be governed by the Bible. When the means of gratifying appetite, or exciting passion, appear before you, or when you are tempted to place your hearts on the world, remember that you must die. On earth you are a stranger, passing quickly to your eternal home. Let this truth sink deep, regulate your appetites, govern your passions, and take off your hearts from things below. They will soon be to you as though they had never been; except as to the effect which your having had them, and used them, will have on your character and your future condition; this will last for ever. Keep this in view, and look not at things seen and temporal, but at things unseen and eternal.

Even those who profess to believe God, are often excessively devoted to this world. They are lifted up by its smiles, or cast down by its frowns. They are so anxious to obtain it, are so disappointed if they cannot, or so envious towards those who can, that they have no rest; and sometimes they continue

this course, till they are on the brink of the bottomless pit. My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped, I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked; they have no bands in their death; their strength is firm; they are not in trouble as other men are; their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart can wish; while the poor Christian turns from overwhelming disappointment, and sorrows of a full cup are wrung out unto him, and he is tempted to say, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence, for I am plagued all the day, and straitened every moment. But let him go up into the temple of the Lord, and in the light of eternal ages, view their end. O! Thou castest them down into destruction, and they are desolated in a moment!

The sight of this should banish all envious, all covetous, and all discontented feelings from the minds of Christians. On earth they are pilgrims, never to rest till they arrive in glory. There is but one rest that remaineth for the people of God. They cannot find it, they ought not to expect it, till they pass over Jordan. Clusters indeed from that land of promise they *may* expect; they might have them often, to cheer and strengthen them on their journey, would they pass by the poisonous fruits of the wilderness, and leave an example which should testify to those who come after, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." Still the permanent joy which they will here experience, should they be as holy as Moses, as heavenly-minded as Daniel, and as active for God as Paul, compared with what they will have in heaven, can be only as a drop to the boundless ocean. And yet their joy on earth may be unspeakable and full of glory. What then will it be in heaven, as they behold the face of Christ, see him as he is, and are for ever *like* him! How great then the folly, and how tremendous the guilt, of giving up those joys for these trifles!

But those joys no man can obtain, without, while on earth, being sober; governing his appetites, his passions, and his affections, by the Bible. What he knows to be sin; he must renounce; and what he knows to be duty, he must perform, let the self-denial be what it may. If a man lives in what he *knows* to be sin, or continues to neglect what he *knows* to be duty, vain is that man's hope of heaven. It does not purify him; it is not the hope of the gospel; and it will be like the spider's web, when God taketh away the soul.

Would you, my hearers, have that hope which maketh not ashamed? Form no plans, engage in no business, speak no words, indulge no feelings, but what you really believe, after all the light that you can gain, God will approve. Let, *Thou God seest me*, be written upon your hearts, and under it, *Thy favor is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life*. In keeping his commands, fear not those who can only kill the body; but fear *Him*, who can kill also the *soul*. Whatever be the consequences, let his will, at all times, and in all places, govern you. Trust in Jesus Christ, and make it your great object to obey *all* his commands. This is of infinite moment, not only to you, but to all who may succeed you. You may soon die: but you leave an *example*, the influence of which can *never* die. Suppose you are a parent, and neglect the Lord Jesus; your example, long after you are dead, may lead your children to neglect him; and their example may lead their children to neglect him; and thus the influence may extend to the end of time. Nor once imagine that you do no evil, merely because you are not openly immoral. If you neglect the Lord Jesus—if you do not *live for him*—you may do greater evil than men or angels can describe.

Nor once imagine, on the other hand, that you cannot do great good, because you may not have great talents, learning, property, or influence. Let all that you have, be it more or less, be devoted to Christ, and you may, through grace, do greater good than Gabriel can conceive.

The reading of the life of David Brainerd, led Henry Martyn to resolve that

he would be a missionary, and spend his life in translating the Bible, and preaching the gospel to those who had never heard of Christ. In pursuance of this resolution, he left his father's house, his native country; and although he died a young man, he had preached the gospel to thousands, who before had never heard it; and translated the whole of the New Testament into Hindostanee, and also into Persian; languages in which it was before unknown, and in which it will be read by millions to all future generations. Such was the influence of David Brainerd, more than half a century after he was dead, on a single man, more than three thousand miles from the place where he lived and died. And upon how many other men has the life of Brainerd produced an influence which will be felt when the earth and heavens are dissolved!

But Brainerd, you say, was a *minister*, and no doubt ministers should be holy men, because they are in public stations, and their influence is important; but *we* are private Christians, in obscure stations; and can there be any such great good accomplished by our example and influence? A woman in a private station had a little child, whom she early taught the truths of the Bible by means of the tiles in the chimney. And that child was Philip Doddridge; whose influence is felt through kingdoms, and will continue to be felt, till the kingdoms of this world are no more.

Another woman in a private station, had a son, with whom she often prayed; but, called of God, she left him motherless before he was five years old. Her instructions, however, and her prayers, after twenty years of wickedness, awakened in his bosom compunctions of conscience, and brought him to deep repentance. That man was John Newton; who afterwards became a minister, and was the means of bringing hundreds, and probably thousands, of others to repentance; among whom was *one*, whose "Star in the East" has electrified Christendom; and *another*, whose "Family Bible" is now read by fifty thousand families, and will help forward millions to glory.

So much can be *seen*, even in this distant world, and while looking through a glass darkly, to be connected with the fervent prayers and pious labors of one obscure woman, who had no greater means of exerting an influence on the world, than has every mother in this assembly. Could you look forward and trace the influence of that one obscure woman through a few of the unnumbered ages of eternity,—O what a prospect!—And such a prospect, my friends, if you will live for Christ, and devote your all to him, may open before each one of *you*. And what are the little concerns of kingdoms, and empires, and worlds, compared with the glory of turning many to righteousness, and shining as the stars in the firmament, and as the sun in his strength, for ever and ever!

The good which you may do, does not depend so much on the greatness of the influence which you exert, as it does upon the *kind*. Let all the influence which you have, be for Christ, and you will accomplish a good, the greatness of which will be the theme of adoring praises, from multitudes that no man can number, to endless ages.

But to accomplish so much, you must follow also the other direction of the text:—

2. *Watch unto prayer*. Prayer, humble, believing, affectionate, persevering prayer, in the name of Christ, and for the purpose of promoting his glory and the salvation of men, is, in its influence omnipresent, in its results omnipotent. By it a person may do good at home and abroad; throughout the city in which he lives, throughout the country, and throughout the world; and he may continue to do good throughout all future ages. *Open your mouths wide*, saith God, *and I will fill them*. In answer to prayer, blind eyes may be opened, and deaf ears be unstopped; the lame man made to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing: in the wilderness waters to break

out, and streams in the desert ; the highway to become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water ; and through the habitation of dragons, a highway may be opened, on which the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.

In answer probably to the prayers of Richard Baxter, his "Call to the unconverted," is now awakening many sinners, and his "Saint's Rest," guiding multitudes of Christians to glory. In answer to the prayers of Paul, the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach unto all nations, may now be flying through the midst of heaven.

The prayers of David for Zion, the city of our God, as her watchmen stand on her walls, see eye to eye, and proclaim the glories of her King, may now be receiving their fulfilment.

And the prayers of Abraham, for the multitude of nations promised to him, may now be receiving their fulfilment.

Let any man pray like Paul, like David, and Abraham, and no tongue can tell the greatness or the extent of the blessings, which, in answer, may descend. One blessing such a man will certainly secure ;—*his own eternal life*. Yes, "whosoever thus calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." And he may be the means of saving others, in greater and still greater numbers, from generation to generation, down to the end of the world. And as ages unnumbered roll away, a revenue of ever increasing glory, may, in answer to his prayers, redound to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And is not here motive enough to lead every Christian, every day, in secret and in his family, to call upon God ? and to offer that humble, believing, affectionate, persevering prayer, which avails so much ? I do not say, in that case, that there will certainly be a revival of true religion which will spread over this whole city and country ; but I *do* say, that you may expect it ; and if there should be such a revival, I do not say that your children will all be partakers ; but I do say that you may hope for it. And if they should be born of the Spirit, have heaven for their home, and God for their eternal portion, what more can you wish for them ? They will hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; the Lamb himself will lead them to fountains of living water, and will wipe away forever all tears from their eyes. Should you die before you see such a change, and be with cherubim and seraphim in glory, *there* you may learn, by the tidings brought upward, that they have repented in answer to your prayers ; and that the number of penitents is increasing, and increasing, till revival meets revival, and the whole earth is filled with the glory of God.

Pray then, my hearers, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and you shall have the benefit of such prayers while you live, and when you die : and after you arrive in glory, you may witness multitudes, in answer to your supplications when on earth, coming up to join with you, and with the ten thousand times ten thousand, in that grand alleluia,—**BLESSING AND HONOR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB FOR EVER AND EVER.**

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xviii. 19.

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SERMON LXII.

BY DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M.

BENNINGTON, VERMONT.

THE SON OF GOD MUST BE REVERENCED.

MATT. xxi. 37.—*They will reverence my son.*

Our Lord, in the context, represents the ingratitude and the barrenness of the Jewish church, by a parable of a vineyard leased for several successive years to unworthy husbandmen, who would not yield the owner any of its fruits ; but treated unmercifully every servant sent to receive them. They "took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. But, last of all, he sent unto them his son ; saying, *They will reverence my son.* But they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

We read, that the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and Judah his pleasant plant. He had given them his written word, and had sent among them his prophets. He had displayed before them his glory, and had, as it were, surrounded them by a munition of rocks. The early and the latter rains had rendered their lands fertile, and the blessing of God had prospered them, in all that they set their hands to do. Thus Israel was emphatically a vineyard. But when God had a right to expect that the vines he had planted and nourished would bring forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. The very people he had chosen, killed his prophets, polluted his worship, and hewed down his altars ; and finally imbrued their hands in the blood of his Son.

Hence the parable, delivered by him who spoke as never man spake, must have had amazing point and force. It aroused their anger, and they would at once have laid hands on him, if they had not feared the multitude. God had a right to expect, that they would welcome to their sanctuary the promised Redeemer, and would hail his birth as the pledge

of their redemption. But in their cruelties to the Son of God, they acted out the native temper of the human heart, and showed themselves to be just such men as lived before and have lived since the period of the Saviour's advent. What is said of Israel may be said of men in all ages:—

It might have been presumed that they would treat kindly the Son of God.

This doctrine may be established by the following considerations:—

1. That men would treat Him kindly, might have been justly presumed, *from the divinity and glory of his highest nature.* He had a divine as well as human nature: he was "God manifest in the flesh." Previous to his coming, it had been as distinctly asserted, that he was divine, as that he would be human. That prediction of him, "To us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," had been read by the posterity of Abraham; and foretold Him in his divine and in his human character. They had reason to expect a Saviour, who built the worlds, and who governs the worlds he built. Hence the thought of treating him with contempt was impious—like offering direct insult to Jehovah. And he had no sooner appeared, than both his natures became manifest. As man he hungered, while as God he created bread to feed the multitude: as man he thirsted, but as God he converted the water into wine; as man he could suffer, and bleed, and die, while as God he could make the sufferer whole; and even summon the dead from their graves. Thus the accusers, the judges, and the executioners of the Lord Jesus, could have no want of evidence that he was the mighty God. Hence, it might have been presumed, that if he must die, God himself must slay him. He must come to his sepulchre by the immediate hand of Omnipotence. No one would dare to betray him, no soldiery would have hardihood enough to arrest him, no miscreant would sit to judge him, no multitude would insult him, none would dare to crucify him. And we should seem to reason correctly in all this, carrying ourselves back to the period before his coming. And still we should reason contrary to matters of fact.

We should have said, anterior to his offering himself to men as their Mediator and their friend, that they would all accept his proffered friendship. When God himself offers to save, how can man reject him? He who now stretches out his hands to the wretched and the lost of this assembly, is the same infinite Redeemer who called Lazarus from the grave, who fed the multitude, who stilled the waves, who burst the bands of death, and proved his divinity by ascending triumphant on high. Angels, and other beings who might know what an offer men would thus have of salvation by Jehovah himself, could not have believed that sinners would treat him as they do;—that from Sabbath to Sabbath they would hear his overtures, and turn their back upon him. They would not have conceived it possible, that men, after all he has done, would question his divinity, and rob him of his glory, and persecute his people.

If God should render himself visible, and stand from Sabbath to Sabbath with pardons in his hand, pressing men to accept forgiveness and live, the obstinacy of sinners would appear just what it is. For, one who is divine, does thus stand. He appropriates to himself all the glories of the Godhead, has the titles, does the works, possesses the attributes, receives the worship, and claims the honors of the Father. He is adored in heaven, under the appellation of the Lamb, in every anthem. And still he stands knocking unheeded at the door of the sinner's heart, till his head is wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night; till we hardly know which is the most surprising, his condescension or the sinner's obstinacy. "They will reverence my Son."

2. It might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus would be kindly treated by men, *from the perfect excellence of his character as a man*. There was nothing in him to provoke the anger of good beings. There was neither pride, nor jealousy, nor selfishness, nor passion, nor any of those evil affections that so often involve men in disgraceful broils. He was meek and lowly of mind. He had a character of perfect loveliness. His lips were charged with blessings, and not with curses: "there was no guile found in his mouth." He loved the souls of men, more than he loved his life. There was nothing in him for men to blame or quarrel with, but every thing that could be desired to draw forth their strongest emotions of gratitude and love.

Who could conceive of a race of beings so vile, that they would quarrel with an angel? yet angels have no such worth, as was found in the Son of God. The prophets had human nature left, and might provoke the rage of their enemies, and tantalize their persecutors. They might demand the fruit of the vineyard, in a manner not the most condescending and kind, and might contribute, by their own unworthy conduct, to fan the fires that were kindling to consume them. And the apostles were men of like passions with those who mocked them and stoned them. While they demanded boldly, and promptly, the fruit of the vineyard, they might, perhaps, sometimes make the demand rudely. But, "they will reverence my Son." Nothing that was wrong in prophets and apostles was found in him; and what was wanting in them, was in him. He made every doctrine plain, and every duty clear and obvious. He never pressed the conscience till he had enlightened the understanding, nor used an argument that was not sound and good. His honesty, and integrity, and wisdom, entitled him to the credit and the kindness of all men.

Now, are ungodly men aware, that it is this same kind and good Redeemer, who now offers to conduct them to the abodes of glory, but whose kindness they spurn, and whose love they despise? Could it have been believed by those who knew him and adored him, that men would thus treat him, as do all the impenitent? "They will reverence my Son."

3. It might have been presumed, that men would treat kindly the Lord Jesus, *from the reasonableness of his claims*. He came not to reap where he had not sown, or gather where he had not strewed. He came not to

demand allegiance, when another had a better right to the sceptre than himself; he came not to a world that had another for its creator, its benefactor, and redeemer. He is emphatically represented as having come "to his own, but his own received him not." This world belongs to the Lord Jesus from its foundation to its top-stone. To him pertain the wisdom of having planned it, the glory of having built it, the right to govern it, and the authority to judge it. All creatures, in him live, and move, and have their being. Hence he has a right to our services, independently of his redeeming right. The breath he gives he may require to utter itself in praise; the arm he nerves he may tax with duty; and the eye he enlightens he may reasonably expect to regard him with perpetual complacency.

And when we take into account the ransom price he paid, his own blood, by which he purchased anew the world that was his before, his claim to us and ours is too manifest to be disputed. "He gave himself a ransom for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." In demanding our hearts, then, he demands what is his by a double right; the right of creation and of purchase. We owe to him all we have, and all we are, and all we hope for. We can adore no other sovereign without treason against him, and serve no other master without robbery. All the angels of God are directed to worship him; and if angels, who are his by feebler ties, must pay him supreme respect, then his right to us, and his property in us, none but devils, surely, can have the audacity to question. Hence, from the justness of his claims, it might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ. The vineyard and all its fruits are his.

4. It might have been presumed, that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ, *from the condescending kindness of his intentions*. He stood in no need of us. He would have had an empire large enough to be the organ of his praise, if we had perished. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." And if men had been passed by, and not redeemed, he would, no doubt, have drawn out to view, in some other way, his mercy and his wisdom, which now display themselves in the economy of redemption. He might have redeemed, for aught we know, the lost angels; or might have displayed redemption among the population of some other forlorn and ruined world, or might have revealed his gracious character to us, as he has his eternity, through the word of inspiration. Christ was not dependent on us, either for the stability of his throne, or the promulgation of his glory, or the felicity of his being. No motive brought him to our world but pure benevolence. He "so loved the world," that he gave himself as its ransom. Its miseries moved his pity, and he stooped to help us. He would not have come, had he not been kind and gracious. True, he showed a special regard to the law; would have it honored; would not allow one jot or tittle of it to fail; and hence may be viewed as having come to "establish the law;" but it must be remembered, that the law might have been honored in its execution

upon the guilty : so that, independently of the idea of saving sinners, there was no need of the death of Christ, in order to honor the law. Hence his errand into our world was emphatically an errand of love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of Christ was the basis of the covenant of redemption. It led him to lay aside his glory, and cover himself with a veil of flesh, and become "acquainted with grief." "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." He who built all worlds, condescended to say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Thus, "by grace are we saved."

Now, it might have been presumed, that the Lord Jesus Christ, on an errand so benevolent, would have been treated well. His design was too kind to deserve any other than the kindest and most prompt reception. Had he gone to devils instead of men, it would seem impossible but they must have received him kindly, when on such an errand, with such heavenly designs. The very pit, it would seem, must have echoed with his praise. Hence, if men have a better character, as they boast they have, ask them how they receive the message of divine mercy. Does the Lord Jesus possess the throne of your heart? Is he the sovereign object of your fear, your love, your hope, and your worship? If not, then cast from you that exalted opinion of yourself, which raises you a single degree above the tenants of the pit.

5. It might have been presumed, that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ, *from his known ability to save*. Had he come in such weakness as would have rendered the enterprise doubtful on which he had entered, then there might have been a temptation to despise him. Had he failed in making the atonement, or been unable to change the heart, or proved inadequate to the work of leading on his people, to victory and glory, after he had enlisted them, then had he brought all the measures of his mercy into contempt, and angels would have refused to do him homage. But he was able to do all. He had but to lay down a life which none could take from him, and the price of our redemption was paid. He had but to speak the word, and the veriest rebel bowed to his mandate. And he has always, with consummate skill, led on the sacramental hosts of his elect to the abodes of paradise. Hence, he is said to have "trodden the winepress alone;" he is represented as "traveling in the greatness of his strength;" is said to "gird his sword upon his thigh;" and to "ride forth conquering and to conquer."

Now, we needed just such a Redeemer; one who was "mighty to save." We were in a condition too forlorn to be redeemed by any other than an Almighty Saviour. Hence, when such a Saviour was offered, how could men do otherwise than kindly receive and joyfully embrace him? How could he fail to gain their confidence and love, and be the chosen Captain of their salvation, their Lord, and their King? "They will reverence my Son."

6. This might have been presumed, from his ability to *destroy*, as well as to *save*. The Saviour comes, it is true, with an offer of mercy; but he comes, too, clothed with all the authority of the Godhead. He will one day say, as in the parable, "These mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." The offers he makes to sinners they cannot with impunity reject. A blessing offered us by our fellow-men may be received or not, as we please, and, if rejected, there accrues no guilt: not so the offer of mercy by Jesus Christ. He comes to demand our hearts as his throne; and will bless us if we receive him; but we are cursed if we reject him.

And the sinner, it would seem, must *know* that he is strong to destroy. He hurled the rebel angels from heaven, and fastened them in chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day. He drowned a world, when it would not have him to reign over it. And all his foes he has sent to a hopeless perdition, as fast as they have evinced themselves incorrigibly wicked. Kind as are now his overtures, and extensive his promises, and prolonged his endurance, still, if you remain impenitent, he must stain his raiment with your blood. His eyes will be as flames of fire; and out of his mouth will go a sharp sword, to smite the ungodly; and on his vesture and on his thigh will be seen written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." How tremendous the thought, that the very Lord Jesus, at whose feet so many sinners have found pardon, will rise upon the finally incorrigible in all the greatness of his strength, and "tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury!" To such a Prince, how fair the presumption, that every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

Finally, it might have been presumed that sinners would treat kindly the Lord Jesus *from their necessities*. He found them "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He passed by, and saw them as an infant "cast out into the open field," in the day that it was born. We had fallen under the curse of the broken law—had neither righteousness, nor holiness, nor happiness, nor hope. There was nothing for us but misery now, and "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, that must devour the adversary." Thus, our necessities put us in need of a friend—an almighty friend—one that could pity and help the most miserable. Could it then have been presumed, that, should such a friend offer his aid, beings so lost and miserable would reject him?

One would sooner conceive that a beggar would spurn the plenty and the pleasures of a palace, and choose to lodge in the street; or that the blind would choose to grope their way to the grave, when they might have vision; or that a dying man would refuse the touch that might give him life and health.

I close with three remarks:—

1. The sinner's final ruin is *unnecessary*. All the purposes of his personal perdition may now be answered in the Saviour. The law can be honored, and God honored, and he escape damnation. All the purity of the precepts, and all the attributes of the Godhead, are displayed in the

Lord Jesus Christ, far more amply than in the volume of "smoke that ascendeth up for ever and ever." O yes; the cross, that everlasting monument of a dying Saviour, reveals the Deity far more intelligibly than the "everlasting fire." Hence, the sinner is lost, not because of any necessity for his ruin; not because of any doom that chained him down to death; not because his salvation was impossible; not because Heaven could devise no other expedient for securing the divine veracity; not because of any thing we can think of—but that he "chose darkness rather than light"—and "death rather than life." Hence,

2. His ruin will be *self-induced*. By this, I do not mean merely that he is a voluntary agent in breaking the divine law. This, sin always implies. I intend more than this. The sinner puts forth his hand, and thrusts from him the charter of forgiveness. He might have had life after he was condemned; after his death-warrant was written and sealed; after the pit had been prepared to receive him. Nay, when hell itself was begun in his bosom, and the divine anger was consuming him—even then eternal life was possible,—but he "chose death!" Hence,

Finally, his ruin will be *wanton*. He will be viewed for ever as having sported with his soul; as if it had been a pearl, and he had run with it to the mouth of the pit, and cast it in; or as if it had been a combustible world, and he with a torch had set it on fire. He employed himself in scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, and still professed himself to be in sport. The man who plunges the knife in his own heart, does not more wantonly die, than the impenitent hearer of the Gospel plunges himself in perdition. O, how affecting, that hell should be thus peopled by a world of suicides, who dared the vengeance, and tantalized the compassion, and despised the forbearance of the Eternal! It might reasonably have been presumed, *They will reverence my Son*. But no! insulted Jehovah! they pour indignity upon his name and his cross, despise his messengers, and "perish in their sins," rather than do him homage, and humbly seek redemption through his blood.

"I HEAR a voice that comes from far;
From Calvary it sounds abroad;
It soothes my soul, and calms my fear:
It speaks of pardon bought with blood.

And is it true, that many fly
The sound that bids my soul rejoice;
And rather choose in sin to die,
Than turn an ear to mercy's voice!

Alas for those!—the day is near,
When mercy will be heard no more;
Then will they ask in vain to hear
The voice they would not hear before."

SERMON LXIII.

BY DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M.

THE TWO CHAMPIONS CONTRASTED.

ISAIAH, xl. 30, 31.—*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

THE sentiment is often entertained, that religion is suitable only for the weak, the aged, and the infirm; but is quite *useless*, if not *injurious*, to the young, healthful, and prosperous. When we have yielded all the respect we can to men who advance this sentiment, we must still pity their delusion. It can never be said that piety injures the young man. He may cultivate in connexion with it all the amiable properties of human nature. May be mild and affable; may be decent and ardent; modest and courageous. These lovely and noble qualities religion does not eradicate, but cherish. Can it cast a shade of deformity over them, to add the love and fear of God, who is supremely amiable? Are men so hostile to their Maker, that respect for him and obedience to him, must make a wound incurable in one's reputation? Then must it be acknowledged, that this is indeed a fallen world.

Is it feared that religion in the young man will cramp his genius, and stop the march of intellect? It would be strange indeed, if a taste for the noblest of all sciences, the knowledge of God and his truth, should narrow the mind, and limit the flight of genius. Such a result would contradict all experience, and give the lie to the first principles of mental science.

Is it feared that piety will wither and paralyze the native fearlessness of youth, and render tame and cowardly the man whose courage and daring might have astonished the world? Does then the love of God, the very principle that makes alliance with the hosts of heaven, and with God himself, diminish our courage, and make us fly when none pursueth? We should expect it far otherwise, and should look for a bravery that no danger could daunt, when there is for our defence a host of angels, and One "higher than the highest." The psalmist reasoned thus, and said, "The Lord is my strength, of whom shall I be afraid?" And Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

What is it, then, that in the esteem of the ungodly renders religion so uncomely in the young man? Where does it fix deformity? True, it does render him less covetous of this world's goods, and less ambitious of *its honors*, less daring in its deeds of darkness, less deceitful, and less *intriguing*. But is he the less a man, and deserving of less esteem? In such a

suggestion there is an infidelity too barefaced to be hidden. The amount of it is, that piety implies the fear of God ; and this is, to the ungodly, the most offensive of all attributes.

The text will lead us to look at the two characters—the youth who sets out to press his way through life and death by the dint of native courage, and the one who waits on the Lord, and thus gathers strength from heaven to bear him on to victory and glory.

I would here premise, that this is a stormy life. Upon every man, more or less, the tempests will beat. Be his character godly or ungodly, he will have foes, and meet dangers, and suffer hardships, and feel afflictions, and will say, before he gets through, that he is passing a desert world. Now we must encounter the calamities of life by native prowess, or by the courage of piety : Which will aid us the best ? This is the question which I wish may be pondered with solemnity for a few moments.

I shall mention some of the storms of life, that we shall all be sure to meet ; and inquire, as I pass on, which has the safest defence—the mere man of the world, or the man of piety.

1. We shall all probably part with beloved friends. The ties that bind them to us are slender, the sport of every wind that blows, and every dew that falls. They are ours only by loan, and must be resigned. We may have warnings of their departure, or may have none. They may be torn from us at the moment of our highest attachment—when our life is bound up in theirs—when it shall seem to us that we have nothing to stay for, if they must leave us. This calamity will certainly come, alike upon the good man and the unbeliever. Which will sustain it best ? They stand together by the death-bed of a mother, a father, a sister, a brother : they have the same instinctive passions ; they both feel the stroke, and must try to outlive it. But by what principles shall they brace their minds against the storm ?

The unbeliever may hope to forget his sorrow, or find some other friend as good, or draw from something else the comfort he has enjoyed in his dying friend. But all this is a distant and uncertain relief. He will find it difficult to forget his friend, and he dare not wish to, and months, or even years, must elapse before he can hope to. Nor will he find it easy to supply the place of his friend. Such friends do not rain down from heaven, do not spring up from the ground, cannot be bought. A mother, for instance,—who can supply her place ? Who, like her, will wear out her nature to serve you, and watch by your sick-bed, and feel every pang, and wipe away your tears ? What friend will become dear to you as your brother, and suffer to befriend you, and endure any thing but death to save you ? I know “there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother ;” but he is the friend of the godly ; not yours. And you will find it difficult, if you have lost a friend, to secure the same amount of enjoyment elsewhere. Friends are our choicest blessings. Wealth is trash, and fame is air ; but a friend, in this cold-hearted world, is a precious pearl. See then how distant and doubtful is the consolation of the ungodly.

Take some of the still nearer and dearer friends, and the case is more hopeless still. The mother must see her child taken in the cold embrace of death. And she tries—does she? to live through it without divine support. Now where and when will she find one, who will call her mother, and feel her pains, and watch her tears, and soothe her miseries? “Oh,” I hear her say, unless she has still another son, “My gray hairs come down with sorrow to the grave. I shall go weeping to the sepulchre for my son.”

Or the dying friend is a wife. Go now, and find, if you can, one who will be a mother to your children. Try if you can forget her endearments. Try if you can find in any other object the amount of joy you had in her. Oh, how the agonies of the ungodly wring pity from our hearts. This is the onset when “the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.” No native vigor can enable one to brow-beat a storm like this, and not be in the result a hopeless and desponding sufferer. The heart loses its courage, soon as it enters the conflict. No cold philosophy can reason down affection, or mitigate the agonies of separation. And the poor survivor, whether a father or mother, a wife, a sister, or brother, if an unbeliever, can only “lie down in sorrow.”

But not so the Christian, who waits upon the Lord. He has in heaven a better Friend than he has lost, and can smile at the ravages of death, as hurting only some of his minor interests. He can immediately transfer the affection he fixed upon his friend, to God; and reap, in an hour, a return infinitely better than any fruits of earthly friendship. He holds all his living friends as the loan of Heaven, ready to be transferred to their original Proprietor. And in the hour of trial his soul utters with deep sincerity, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He has not to wait till he can forget his friend, or find another, or procure some substitute. He “waits upon the Lord,” and is thus strengthened for the hour, and becomes happy in the midst of tears. He passes through the waters, but God is with him; and through the floods, but they do not overflow him. He walks through the fire, but is not burned, neither does the flame kindle upon him. His song is, “The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” He never calculated on any very durable good from earthly things, as does the unrenewed man. Hence, he is not disappointed. His best hopes are not cut off, nor his richest prospects darkened. God has been as good to him as his promises, and better than his own fears. His trials will soon end in heaven. There he will join a circle of friends to whom he has been long more attached than to any other. Thus he mounts as on eagles’ wings, scales the very heavens, runs and is not weary, walks and is not faint.

At how many funerals have we witnessed this wide contrast between the native prowess of a mind unsanctified, and the fortitude of a man of God strengthened for the trial by the light of *his* countenance.

Come, then, my young friends, let me assure you, how only you can be happy in the hour of bereavement. You may suppress your tears when

you attend the funeral of your mother, or your brother, but nature will feel. You may put on the stoic, but the heart will bleed. You may try to cheer your spirits, but your strength will fail, unless God in that hour is your refuge, your very present help. If you intend to live without him, you need hope for nothing but that his waves and his billows will often come over you, while there will be no comforter. You have twenty dear friends, and one may die each year, these twenty years; and ere then you may die yourself. Thus the heart will bleed, and you will be covered with the weeds of death, all the way to the sepulchre. I should not choose to be one of your friends, unless I could believe that you would think of me when I was gone one year; that my funeral solemnities would create a cloud, that would cast its shade upon you till the sun had performed at least one annual revolution. Let each friend make the same demand, and you have no divine support under your bereavements, and you readily see that the whole of life is a cloudy and dark day.

I have noticed yet the loss of friends *by death* only; but we may lose them more tremendously, *by desertion*. Let the hour come when it shall not be popular to be your friend, and when many who have sought your acquaintance, and received your hospitality, and waited to know and do your pleasure, shall hide their face from you; then is the hour when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." I know there is a buoyancy in the human heart, that may seem for a moment to sustain you. You can despise the man whose sycophancy deceived you, but who was never your friend, and has now only uncovered to you the rottenness of his heart. You can resolve to despise the men who are the friends of your prosperity, but not of your adversity; and they deserve to be despised: but you will feel a pain dart through you in that hour, which you must sustain, either by your native prowess or by a higher courage. Would you trust in an arm of flesh? Ah, but this arm fails you; and then where will you lean? Now, the good man has no misgivings in such an hour. With him it is a living maxim, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." Paul could keep up all his courage while in the midst of a people who not long before would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him, but were now become his enemies because he told them the truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who had all the tenderness of our nature, could, without despair, hear the cry, Crucify him! crucify him! uttered by that same multitude whose blind he had made to see, whose lame to walk, whose lepers he had cleansed, whose sick he had healed, and whose dead he had raised. All this one can easily sustain who has an almighty Friend in heaven. He can pour a holy contempt upon the wavering men who have no principle, and will desert him when he needs their friendship most. He can stand erect, because *God* is with him. But how can *you* stand, who have no such friend, but whose whole kindred are in this deceitful world?

Here is the spot where it will again happen that "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

2. Amid the changes of this ill-fated world we shall all be liable to suffer the loss of property. No treasure but that which is laid up in heaven is secure; our houses may burn down over our heads; our streams may fail; a foe may rob us of our rights; we may be called to spend all we have upon physicians; we may lose our spirit of enterprise; our reason may desert us. All the good things of this life are ready to take wings and fly away.

Now, can the man who has no treasure in heaven sustain his spirit, as can the man of faith and of prayer? By what consideration can he comfort his soul, when ye shall have taken away his goods? When he is robbed of his best treasures, of *all he has* in the life that now is, while he has nothing in the life to come, how can he fail to sink? Says the sacred penman, "Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." He who has no interest in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, how can he part with his temporal habitation? He who has no treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt, how can he part with his corruptible riches? He who has no greatness or glory in the kingdom of God, how can he dispense with that which renders him great in the present world? Made once poor for time, how can he hope for any thing else but eternal bankruptcy? If he should hope *to rise again*, still this is a "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick." If he try to be great in his poverty, still, in a world like this, he will find it difficult, not to say impossible. If he would try to be happy, while yet he is small, here pride erects an insurmountable barrier. He lacks all the means of being happy. The good he values, his only good, is gone. The heaven he built for himself had no foundation, and the storms have swept it away. Poor soul, how completely is he made a bankrupt, and a beggar, and how impossible that he should retrieve his circumstances, till he is altered essentially in his disposition and character!

But things are not thus desperate with the good man, when he finds his estate diminished. We read of those who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The friends of God have laid up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." They have provided themselves with "garments that wax not old," and have "a house not built with hands eternal in the heavens." In the midst of losses, they often see that the riches they have parted with stood between them and God, and made them less happy and less holy than they may be without them. They held the heart divided, and kept it cold, and worldly, and selfish, and sordid. Now the clog is removed, and they can mount up as on the wings of eagles. They have now *nothing but heaven* to care for; what they have lost they could have used but a little while, and they can mount higher without it. They still have all that God ever promised:

their bread and their water is made sure. If they can never be rich here, still they can hope for durable riches and righteousness in the life to come. If they must toil hard, still their rest will at last be long and sweet. If they must be small and unnoticed, still there awaits them "a crown of glory" in the life to come. Thus, how evident that no native prowess can enable one to conflict with the storms of life like the grace of God.

3. But let us try the prowess of the two champions in another conflict. While one storm shall beat upon friendship, and another upon property, another still may make its assault upon character. This you know is valuable as life. "A good name is better than precious ointment." Being deprived, we are vulnerable at every point. "There is no man that liveth and doeth good and sinneth not." We break the laws of God and of man. We violate the dictates of conscience, and the rules of righteousness. And that man knows nothing of himself, that does not acknowledge all this. Hence we become justly exposed. Men can injure us, and say the truth.

But what is more yet; the utmost uprightness of character does not secure from the attack of slander. If men cannot find enough that is true, they can unblushingly fabricate the rest. And no man, godly or ungodly, is wholly secure. The godly are forewarned, that as men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, so much rather will they calumniate the household. And now, which, think you, will be the best support through this storm, native prowess, or supernatural grace?

You have known the ungodly man to be slandered. Men have accused him of deeds he never did, have wronged him, and abused him. And he set himself to oppose the tempest. He cursed his accusers, and returned every blow they dealt, and raved at the foe, and sinned more grossly than he ever had before. He plotted revenge, and pursued it, and perhaps obtained it. But after all was done, was he not rather the vanquished than the conqueror. Did he stand on more elevated ground when he *quit*, than when he *began* the conflict? Ah, he overcame evil with evil, and sunk the deeper by his attempts to rise.

Let us view the most favorable case. The man abused is ungodly, but has the properties that constitute an amiable man. He meets the assault with all the calmness and all the patience he can command. He reasons, 'If they destroy my reputation, they take my interest too, and then what have I left.' Having no sense of sin, he is not humble, and will not be very patient. He will not exercise a spirit of forgiveness, nor a spirit of meekness, nor see the wisdom of God in the appointment, nor hope for an augmentation of his enjoyments as the final result. Hence he must be unhappy and must be a loser. His courage may in a sense sustain him, but while he stands he will still be wounded, and perhaps destroyed.

Now the man of God in such a conflict has a *heavenly* armour. In the very onset he takes the shield of faith. He is *patient*, because he sees it to be the hand of God. He is *calm*, from the conviction, that, dark as the storm may lower, he is safe. If his character should be injured, it only assimilates his condition to that of his divine Lord. He has that sense of sin that renders him *humble*. He exercises a spirit of meekness and of

forgiveness; and this renders him *happy*. In the event, as a divine appointment, he sees the wisdom of God, and hopes and believes that in the issue God will be glorified, and his own best good promoted. "To me," he can say with the apostle, "it is a very light thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Can he only hope to stand approved in the last great day, all decisions of fallible men to the contrary, have not, with him, the weight of a feather.

Would an angel care, if the whole population of this world should assemble in a mass, and pronounce him a sinner or a fool! He would know that he might still hold the same standing in the sight of God. So the man of faith can soar and act the angel in the hour of onset. He does not, and dares not depend on any native strength of his own, but "waits upon the Lord, and renews his strength."

4. We are all liable to disease and death. God has not exempted his people, and certainly not his enemies, from this calamity. Disease and death are the wages of sin. And here it often happens literally, that "even the youths are faint and weary." We have seen nature struggling with disease even in the very morning of life. The young man, strong and vigorous to-day, panting for breath to-morrow, and in a few days sinking into an untimely sepulchre.

Now the man who hopes to meet all this by native courage, it would seem must be destitute of the power of reasoning. The very nature of the calamity augurs that he will have neither strength nor courage to bear it. It is the very first effect of disease to render faint and weary—to dishearten and unnerve. The veriest Goliath is a child, when he wrestles with the plague or the pestilence. How then can he stand in the contest?

The mind is enfeebled with the body: hence he cannot reason down his alarms and his apprehensions; cannot sustain his own sinking spirits. He who a few days since would not have feared to meet single-handed the hardest foe that might take the field, cannot now raise his head, and is in fear, where no danger is. He may have some consolation from the hope of recovery. But this one hope, tremulous and often forlorn, is the only stay of his soul that remains. If he must die, he is lost for ever.

But here the man of God does not thus sink and perish. He is conscious that he deserves the chastisement; hence has no quarrel with the Power that afflicts. He submits and is calm. He has the promise that God will sustain him, will be with him in six troubles, and in seven will not forsake him. "When flesh and heart fail him, God will be the strength of his heart and his portion for ever,"—"all things shall work together for good to them that love God;" and these promises were all made with design to be fulfilled. Hence the good man, when he suffers, can leave himself with God. Every care and every interest he rolls over upon his generous and almighty Supporter. To him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He can cheerfully wait his "appointed time," and can hope that there is laid up for him "a crown of life that fadeth not."

But what is over and above all this, he enjoys the smiles of God. These lighten his pains and give him joy and peace. Hence sung the weeping poet,

“The chamber, where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven.”

On the very dying bed have we heard the triumphant song, “I mount, I fly.” Infidelity may declare all this visionary; but it is none the less a reality. It is what God has promised, what his people expect, what the diseased and the dying have told us they enjoyed, and is no more incredible than the new birth, at which the ruler of the Jews marveled.

Now take from the mass of the ungodly, the sturdiest youth you can name, and let him go to his chamber and grapple with disease and death; and place in the adjoining chamber the man of prayer, in precisely the same distressing attitude; and tell me which shall have the palm. The one shall use all his native mind and muscle, shall brace himself against the paroxysms of disease, and cheer up his spirits, and resist the fear of death, and to the full extent of his power, stay his false hope, and wake up his courage. His brave associates shall come round him, and ply their sophistry to put down his pains, and put out the eye of conscience, and hide hell from him, and God from him, and his own history from him. And no Bible shall be near him, nor pastor near him, nor prayers be offered. He shall have through the whole conflict all the help that earth and hell can give him. The other shall but make use of prayer and faith, shall stay himself upon his Redeemer, and encourage himself in the Lord his God, and cast the anchor of his hope within the veil. Now tell me which of the two will triumph in the storm. Ah! I see the strong ones bow. Ye, that hate the Lord, let me assure you, your champion is foiled in the contest. “Even the youths shall faint.”

5. I have thought of several other occasions where the ungodly man and the man of faith will have opportunity to test their prowess in the same conflict, but I will add only one. They must both pass the review of the last Judgment. “We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” And to set any value upon a spirit of enterprise or of daring, that will not carry us through that last scene, is to play the fool. I wish to cultivate the principles that will carry me through.

Now follow, if you please, one of the most daring of unbelievers to the last tribunal. How will he manage there? Can he hide his sins? Can he palliate them, or neutralize them? Can he prove that the law was too severe, or the penalty unjust? Can he offer any eloquent plea why he should be acquitted? Will any angel plead for him? Will the blessed Redeemer be his advocate? Will his courage live and thrive in that conflict? If weighed in the balance, will he not be found wanting? If convicted, will not sentence go forth against him? Will devils be afraid to convey him to the place of torment? Suppose him, if you please, to have weathered every other storm, how will he conflict with “everlasting burnings?” By what daring arguments will he keep hope alive in hell, and resist the

embrace of despair, or put out the "unquenchable fires?" Come, ye that intend to brave it through without grace, that dare to live, and expect to die, without an interest in the Lord Jesus, approach the precincts of the pit, and inquire how your champion fares in this last conflict! Does he stand, or fall? Does his courage abide by him? May you venture, or not, to join your destiny with his? Let this point be settled before you venture into your dying chamber without the grace of God.

And how does it fare with the *man of faith* in the same conflict? He ventures not to come to the judgment-seat alone, supported by any courage which his depraved heart can generate. He comes clothed with a Saviour's righteousness, owns his guilt, and pleads the atoning blood of the Redeemer. When bid, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" his reply is, "When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Then will be heard from the throne of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." You recollect the amazing result. They who come to that throne in their own name, and hope to stand by their own native prowess, "*shall go away into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"

Let me say then, fellow-sinner, while you resolve to trust in man, or in anything short of an omnipotent Saviour, there remains for you "no hope," but "a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation." If it seem to you, however, that your cause will succeed, you have only to make the trial. Storms will beat upon you: but if you still think your own heart can generate all the prowess you shall need in the conflicts of life, and death, and judgment, then you must try. It is my duty, however, to assure you, that "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."

But, on the other hand, there is "strong consolation" to you who "*trust in the Lord.*" The promise is, that "you shall mount up on wings as eagles, shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." Now God will do all that he has said; will succour you as he has promised, will enlighten your darkness, will provide you a retreat in temptation, will cover your head in the day of battle, will give his angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, till you have trodden the whole desert through, and passed over Jordan, and entered the New Jerusalem, to go no more out for ever.

While, then, "*the wicked perish at the presence of God,*"—while it becomes them to "*weep and howl for their miseries that shall come upon them,*"—"*let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.*"

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LXIV.

BY JOHN MATTHEWS, D. D.
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THE SINNER'S IMMINENT DANGER.

MATT. vii. 13.—*Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.*

It is a fact, plainly and frequently stated in the Bible, that all men are divided into two, and only two, classes. There is no third class recognised, consisting of neutral characters, too amiable for the bottomless pit, and yet too unholy for heaven. The one class embraces all who have never been *born of God*, who neither believe in Christ, nor repent of their sins. The other class embraces all whose hearts are regenerated by the Spirit and the truth of God. In perfect accordance with this fact, we have the assurance that there are two states, and only two, in the world of spirits: a state of happiness for the righteous, and a state of punishment for the wicked. As there are no neutral characters among men, so there is no middle state between the joys of heaven and the agonies of despair.

Leading to these two states, in the future world, there are two ways; the one, *broad*, with an easy, inviting entrance, through a *wide gate*; the other, *narrow*, entered only through a *strait gate*: the one, crowded with vast multitudes who are led on from pleasure to pleasure, from one pursuit to another, without a serious thought respecting the end of their progress; the other, travelled by a *few*, who are often beset with difficulties and trials; but strengthened by the Comforter, and animated by the blessed assurance, that the way in which they are struggling onward and upward *leadeth unto life*. While these, under the guidance of the truth and Spirit of God, are safe; what will become of those gay, and busy, and thoughtless multitudes who are in the *broad road*? Ardent

Tyre and Sidon, though guilty, are yet less so than Chorazin; Bethsaida, and Capernaum. That sin which you indulged,—the neglect of prayer, for instance,—at the commencement of the year, must be more criminal at the close, in proportion to the divine goodness which has followed you, the forbearance which has waited with you, and the frequency and earnestness with which you are called to repentance. If you had, one day and one year, done nothing but repeat the sins of the preceding, yet the guilt of those sins must be estimated according to the increasing power of the motives to repentance which you have resisted. If this rule is applied to you, as it was to the cities of Galilee, how inconceivably great must now be the amount of your guilt, and the degree of your danger. That river, whose waters flow from day to day, and collect in one place, must, in the course of years, become a great lake; but if that river increase in size and rapidity, every moment, every hour, every month, into what a vast ocean must it swell, in a course of years equal to the years of your life! According to this compound ratio has your guilt been increasing, and will continue to increase with every moment you remain impenitent. If you hear this truth with indifference, this indifference will be more criminal than at any former time, and will thus enhance your danger.

II. Your danger is **CERTAIN**; absolutely *certain*, while you are influenced by an *evil heart of unbelief*. That broad road, in which you are pressing forward, *leadeth to destruction*. Follow its course, and you will soon come to this destruction. Remain impenitent, and you certainly perish. Live and die without faith in the Son of God, and you must be condemned.

Your punishment is certain, because your sins *deserve it*. The law which you have transgressed, is *holy, just, and good*. All its requisitions, all its prohibitions, are perfectly reasonable. Your transgressions, therefore, are most unreasonable and wicked. The design and tendency of this law is, to promote the happiness of those who delight in it. Your disobedience, therefore, necessarily involves your own misery; for *the wages of sin is death; the soul that sinneth, it shall die*. The tendency of your opposition to the law is to prevent and destroy, as far as your influence extends, all the happiness which would be the result of obedience. You are justly, therefore, accountable for all the consequences which your rebellion is calculated to produce. Your transgressions of the divine law deserve punishment on account of the deep injury which they inflict on the moral community: and what you deserve, you will most assuredly receive; for *the Judge of all the earth will do right*.

But if your transgressions against the law deserve punishment, much more do you deserve it for sinning against the gospel. *God, for the*

great love wherewith he loved us, has sent his Son, his *beloved Son*, into the world to die for the salvation of sinners. This Saviour, with all the blessings procured by his death, has been frequently and graciously offered to you; and, with unequalled kindness and perseverance, you have been entreated, and urged to receive him. You have, at the same time, been warned of the danger from which the cross might save you. And yet you have rejected this Saviour; frequently and deliberately rejected the only Saviour. For the truth of this, we appeal to your own conscience. The subject has often engaged your attention; and after pondering it, the conclusion has been deliberately formed, that you *would not have this man to reign over you*. In accordance with this conclusion, you remain to this hour in the *broad road*. At this moment,—when the appeal is again made to your own conscience,—you have no serious intention of submitting immediately to Christ, as your Lord and Saviour. The proof, then, that you have frequently and designedly rejected the Saviour, is clear and abundant. Now, if you were requested to judge in this case, although it is your own, what would you say that this rejection of the Saviour deserves? Can you possibly believe that God ought to view it, and that he does view it, with approbation? If it be true, as it certainly is, that *the Father loveth the Son*, does he also approve and love those who dishonor and reject his Son? Or can you believe that God looks on your conduct with indifference? He once proclaimed from heaven; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. And does he now look with indifference on those who discard this object of his affection and delight? Selfish as you are, and blinded as you are by the love of sin, you cannot believe this of the infinite God. If the human mind can form an idea of fitness, propriety, and justice, it must see that this persevering rejection of the Saviour deserves a punishment such as the hand of Omnipotence alone can inflict.

Your danger is certain, because the character and government of God require the infliction of this punishment. Without it the glory of his character would be obscured, and the foundation of his government shaken. The infinite holiness of God is the object of most ardent love, and the source of sublimest joy to all the inhabitants of heaven. But sin is in direct opposition to this holiness, as darkness is to light. Sin is, therefore, infinitely hateful and displeasing to God. This displeasure must be manifested in a manner and degree adapted to the capacity of finite creatures; otherwise they will not perceive the glory of this holiness. This displeasure is manifested in the death of Christ, in behalf of all who believe in him. But you do not believe in him; for you are yet in the *broad road*. The divine displeasure, therefore, must be manifested in your everlasting condemnation. For should you

days may seem to have no end, because you do not think of that end. According to your estimation, *to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*. But in the view of God, your life is not an indefinite period, but accurately defined, limited, and short. *Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth? Are not his days like the days of an hireling? Man's days are determined; the number of his months is with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. God hath determined the times of men, before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.* He who shut up the sea with doors, and said—*Hitherto shall thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;*—has also said respecting each of you; thus long shalt thou live, but no longer; thus far shall thy minutes flow, but no farther. The waves of the ocean have rolled, and dashed, and broken against its barriers for ages; but these barriers still remain firm and impassable as the decree of Heaven, which gave them their place. Thus absolutely immoveable are the bounds which limit the duration of life. The day, the hour, the moment of your death is appointed. It is folly, it is infidelity, it is downright atheism, to think otherwise. He, *in whose hands your breath is*, certainly knows, because his wisdom has determined it, when he will *take away this breath*. The moment of your death, which is yet future, with equal certainty is known to Him, *in whom you live, and move, and have your being*, with the moment of your birth, which is past. This your appointed time on earth has been shortened by the years, and days, and moments you have already lived. This day, this hour, this moment will shorten so much the more your remaining time. How rapid, and how ceaseless is the flight of these moments! All numbered with as much certainty as are the *hairs of your head*; each one, as it hurries away, giving you the solemn and earnest admonition, that *the time, the moment of your departure is at hand*. How incessant is the heaving of your lungs! But every effort of this kind leaves one less to be made. How quick and regular the pulsations of the heart! But

“Every beating pulse you tell, leaves but the number less.”

At the moment of your birth, your danger was not very distant; but how much nearer is it now? It is nearer this day, this hour, this moment, than it ever was before; and will be nearer to-morrow, should you live, than it is to-day. Solemn and impressive thought!

There now stands a line of men, definite and precise in number, between you and the angel of death; these he is despatching with unweary diligence; they are falling, in most rapid succession. *One* of them, according to calculation, dies every second, *sixty* every minute, *three thousand six hundred* every hour, *eighty-six thousand four hundred* every day, and upwards of *thirty millions* every year. At your birth, this line

consisted of a certain number ; this number has been diminishing by upwards of thirty millions every year you have lived ; and it is now growing less and less by sixty every minute, and by one every second. While you breathe again, while the pulse beats again, while you pause to make the reflection, another is gone ! How incessantly, how rapidly is your danger approaching ! How soon, how unexpectedly may it overtake you ! The one who stands next you, in this line, will soon fall ; and then, your eyes are closed ! your breath is gone ! your end is come ! The sun will dawn on the earth ; but no more for you ! The Sun of righteousness will continue to shine ; but you will be *in the blackness of darkness*, where his cheering beams never come !

Such is the *broad way*. In your mistaken view, it may be safe and filled with pleasures ; but in the view of God, and of all good beings, it is perilous in the extreme. *The end of these things is death. Be wise now, therefore, and ponder the path of thy feet, lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof !*

“ SINNERS, behold that downward road
Which leads to endless wo ;
What multitudes of thoughtless souls,
The road to ruin go !

But yonder see that narrow way
Which leads to endless bliss ;
There see a happy chosen few,
Redeem'd by sovereign grace.

They from destruction's city came,
To Zion upward tend :
The Bible is their precious guide,
And God himself their friend.

Lord, I would now a pilgrim be—
Guide thou my feet aright ;
I would not for ten thousand worlds
Be banish'd from thy sight.”

but mere existence ; which will be sustained that you may suffer. If it were possible, of yourself, to escape this danger, then you might employ your thoughts in devising the means of escape ; but, continuing to reject the Saviour, escape is impossible : your future anguish is as certain as your present existence. Were your danger at a remote distance, you might, with more plausibility, waste a few more days without reflection ; but it is near, and is approaching nearer every moment. Nor can you tell the day nor the hour when it will come upon you. *This night thy soul may be required of thee.* Before another rising sun you may rush into the deep vortex of despair. And can you close your eyes in sleep when the *wrath of God abideth on you*, and the bottomless pit is opening, and moving to receive you ? Can you find any thing more fearfully important to think about ? Can any thing possibly drive these thoughts from the mind ?

Be assured that if ever you escape, that escape will commence with serious thoughtfulness. You will *think on your ways*, if ever you *turn your feet unto God's testimonies*. General, if not universal experience confirms this truth. The Spirit employs the serious reflections of the mind in carrying on his work. Meditating on the guilt and danger of sin, that danger increases to the view ; and the more it increases, the more does it arrest the attention, and impress the heart. This prompts to still further inquiries ; and these inquiries furnish materials for still more impressive and useful reflection. The work of grace in the heart is generally marked by intense application of the mind to spiritual subjects. No sinner, while thoughtless, was ever brought to Christ. While you refuse to meditate on these things ; while you exclude your danger from your thoughts, you only increase that danger. A thoughtless sinner is always unbelieving and impenitent. Were you to meditate frequently and solemnly on your perilous condition, you could not rest, you could not live, without the well-grounded hope of safety.

3. PRAYER is obviously and imperiously your duty. You are in the most imminent danger ; from which God alone can save you. Your own efforts can never effect your deliverance ; but perish you must, unless God is pleased to pluck you as brands from the fire. Nor is he under the slightest obligation to grant you this aid. If ever you obtain life, it will be a gracious gift ; not the payment of a debt, or the reward of merit : it will be an act of mercy, not of justice. If you could reform so perfectly, as never, from this moment, to commit another sin, this could not merit pardon for the sins *already* committed. Ceasing to do evil will never atone for the guilt already contracted. Your only hope of safety then is in the mercy of God ; for which it is your duty and your privilege to pray. Your prayers, indeed, cannot merit the help of God ;

but, when sincere, as they ought always to be, they indicate a willingness, a fitness in you to receive this help. Spiritual life, it is true, is the gift of God; but it is bestowed on those only who desire it. This desire, and this alone, is prayer in the sight of God; mere words convey no meaning to Him who *searches the heart*. This desire of safety is necessarily connected with correct views of your danger. That, in your estimation, cannot be dangerous, from which you do not desire to escape. As it is God alone who can save you, to him should this desire, with deep penitence and earnestness, be directed. This was the desire of the publican; *God be merciful to me a sinner!* This man went up to the temple conscious of his guilt and his danger; the penitent desire of his heart is poured forth to God; he *went down to his house justified. Go thou and do likewise*; and the same will be the result.

And can you, indeed, *restrain prayer before God?* Or if you do, can it be the way of safety? On what evidence do you believe that your danger is so slight, so uncertain and remote, that you need feel at present no desire for deliverance? Satan, no doubt, may suggest, *ye shall not surely die*; an evil heart of unbelief may whisper, *peace and safety*. But, according to the truth of God, destruction is at hand, and will soon come upon you. Is it so, that, in your opinion, the blessings procured by a Saviour's death, the favor of God, the joys and glories of heaven, are not worth asking for? The Divine Redeemer has died for you; and do you tell him, in the language of prayerless hearts, that he has died in vain? that the blessings purchased by his death are worthless, not even desirable? And is this the spirit with which you are to meet death, and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? Will the Judge, on this account, say, *well done?* I died in agonies on the cross to procure pardon for you; but you have well done in refusing to ask for this pardon! If he will not say this,—and it is almost blasphemy even to suppose it,—what will he say? In what language will your sentence be pronounced? Nay, what will you yourselves say? When you behold the dignity of the Son of God, the glories of heaven, the horrors of the bottomless pit; what will you then think and say of a prayerless life? Self-reproached, and self-condemned, will you not say to your Omnipotent Judge; *strike*, for we deserve it; to the glories of heaven, *adieu*, an eternal adieu, for we never prayed for you; and to the gulf of perdition, *receive us to our own place?*

And why not call upon God? He is the *Hearer of prayer*, the *Father of mercies*. Acts of mercy are his delight. Have you ever prayed to him, with a right spirit, and been denied? Search throughout the prison of despair; and you will find none who will say, that humble and earnest prayer for pardon through Christ was ever rejected. All the inhabitants of heaven, taken from this world, will testify, with one voice;

that God was more willing to give the Holy Spirit, with all his transforming influences, than a father is to give bread to his hungry child. All the redeemed of the Lord, now upon earth, will unite in this testimony. Ask your companions in the broad road, if their sincere prayer for pardon was ever rejected. All will reply, No; we never offered such prayer to God. Consider, then, this fact; all who have asked, have received; all who have not received, have not asked. Does this fact encourage you to pray, or to neglect prayer? Can you neglect it when your danger is so near, and so rapidly approaching? This day, this hour may be all the time for prayer that is intended for you. Another day, another hour, and the *door may be shut*; the door of mercy, never again to be opened!

4. Finally, it is your duty to BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST; for *he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*. Your reading, your meditating, your praying, will never save you. These are but the workings and desires of your own minds; they are not the Saviour. While you read, and meditate, and pray, you should remember that you are under condemnation, till you come to Christ. Until you are pardoned, your guilt and danger remain and increase. It is only for Christ's sake that God will forgive sin; and it is by faith alone you can be united to Christ, and thus be interested in the merit of his death. The moment you believe in this Saviour, who died on the tree, your iniquities are blotted out; you pass from death to life; from a state of condemnation to a state of favor with God.

But, *take heed that ye be not deceived*. Mistake not the workings of imagination, however vivid and touching they may be, for the exercises of faith. Mistake not the mere excitement of your passions for the evidences of a new heart and a right spirit. Your imagination and your passions may be excited by other causes than truth. That faith which is the work of God, is the knowledge and hearty belief of the truth. The word, *believe*, implies this. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*. That which you are to believe is the truth of the gospel; the doctrines, promises, and invitations, relating to Christ, and revealed by his authority. By this truth, thus received, you are to be sanctified; for *faith worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world*. Pardon and holiness are inseparably connected. The Saviour not only delivers from the guilt, but also from the love and the power of sin. By mistaking the workings of the imagination, or the mere movement of the passions, for the evidence of faith, you may adopt the dangerous and erroneous opinion that faith is something so vague and so mystical, so different from the common operations of the mind, and especially from the cordial belief of any other state-

ment, that it cannot be understood, or any definite idea be formed of it. But if you remember that faith is the knowledge and hearty belief of the truth, then, of this truth you will see the necessity of forming distinct ideas, otherwise you cannot receive it into your heart. This truth, thus received, will be *the seed of God which remaineth in you*; will be the root, the productive principle to which you may trace the rise and vigor of all those spiritual and devout affections which characterize the children of God, and which, through their influence, if not instantaneously, will yet gradually and certainly, weaken and destroy the sinful propensities of the heart.

Therefore, it is your duty to *believe in Christ*, and to believe *now*; this hour, this *moment*. Your danger is great, is increasing, and is approaching with the speed of thought. You need this Saviour; he is graciously offered to you; with kind solicitude he is urged on your acceptance. In proof of his willingness to save, he has died for you; in proof of his power, he declares that *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*. Why will you not, then, believe in this almighty Saviour? You can assign no reason, you can offer no excuse that is not sinful, for not believing this moment. And will you excuse one sin, by pleading another? If you should thus excuse and satisfy yourselves, will God, your Judge, sustain the excuse? You are not only invited, you are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If you refuse, it will be a sin of the most aggravated guilt; of all sins, the most provoking to God. How interesting then is the crisis to which you have come! By believing in Christ, your safety is secured; by refusing, you disobey the command of God, greatly increase your danger, and perhaps provoke his injured Spirit to depart for ever from your soul.

REMARKS.

1. Nothing can be clearer than that the destruction of sinners will be charged to themselves; it will be because they would have it so. *The reward*, and nothing more than the reward, *of their own hands shall be given them*. Their ignorance is without excuse; for the Bible is constantly open and within reach, for their instruction. Their unbelief is without excuse; for they believe other statements far less interesting, and accompanied with far less evidence of truth, than the gospel. More numerous or more powerful motives cannot be presented to the human mind than those which press upon them the necessity of faith in Christ. These motives are derived from the greatness, the certainty, the nearness, and rapid approach of their danger; from the sufferings and death of a divine Saviour; from the rich and boundless mercy of God. But pow-

erful as these motives are in their nature, the love of sin counteracts their influence. Their unbelief is not accidental, but designed. *They will not come unto Christ that they might have life.* When, therefore, they are condemned by the Judge; when they *go away into everlasting punishment*; not a single look of compassion will follow them; not one emotion of sympathy will be felt for them! Wilfully they have sinned, and wilfully they have rejected the Saviour; and now, unpitied they perish! They have made themselves *vessels of wrath*; they have fitted themselves for destruction!

2. Christian brethren; among those now in the broad road, *you all had your conversation in times past.* Lately, you were as thoughtless and as prayerless as they now are. Why are you not still with them, *fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind?* Who has made you to differ? Your hearts reply; it was God who *apprehended* us, stopped us in our progress to destruction, led us to search the Scriptures, to serious reflection, to prayer, to Christ the Saviour. Gratitude and love, practical and fervent gratitude and love to God, is then your duty and your privilege, for this unmerited kindness, this work of grace, this astonishing exercise of sovereign mercy. You are laid under infinite obligations to Him who has *died for you and rose again.* Let your whole life then be spent in cheerful obedience to his will, in zealous and persevering efforts to promote his glory. Christ has died for you, that you might *live unto God.* *Delight yourselves therefore in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your hearts.* *Be not envious against the workers of iniquity*; but consider and *understand their end.* Think of the *slippery places*, in which they are eagerly chasing the pleasures of sin, *while the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that come upon them make haste!* Taught by the sanctuary of God, see them *brought into desolation, as in a moment, utterly consumed with terrors.* Connect their momentary joys with those consuming terrors; think how soon their *laughter will be turned into mourning, and their joy to heaviness*; and you cannot but feel for them the most deep and lively compassion. Look not back on their pleasures, which you have forsaken, with an eye of regret; but continually *set your affections on things above, and no longer on things on the earth.* The *narrow way*, into which you have been turned, may have its temptations, its conflicts, its sorrows; but it has also its quickening and purifying hopes, its animating joys, its triumphant victories. From time to time, that *city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,* will appear, with all its glories, to the eye of faith, inviting you onward. There you will soon forget the labors of the way, or remember them only to increase your holy exultation, and to give louder and sweeter notes to your songs of everlasting praise. *Amen.*

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SERMON LXVI.

—
BY JOHN NELSON, A. M.

LEICESTER, MASS.

—
THE HAPPY FAMILY.

MATTHEW, x. 13.—*And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it.*

THIS is among the directions which our Lord gave to his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel. On entering any village or town, they were to inquire for a worthy family; and if, after the customary salutations, they found it worthy; that is, kindly disposed to them, and willing to receive the instructions they were commissioned to communicate; they were not only to *abide* in that house, but to “let their *peace*,” that is, the peace of the gospel, “come upon it.” We have no particular account of any of the families thus visited, and taught, and blessed by the ministers of Jesus; but we feel assured, that their condition was most happy, for “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” was with them.

No association of beings on earth, can be more interesting, than that denominated “a family.” There are found the tenderest sympathies and the most endearing relations. There, the painter finds objects for the most touching exhibitions of his art; and there, the poet is inspired with the sweetest melody of song. And if there be a human being, unaffected by the nameless endearments of domestic life, he must have a heart naturally incapable of exquisite emotion, or chilled and *hardened* by the bad influence of the world. But alas! when we come closely to examine even *this*, I had almost said, the only sanctuary of earthly bliss, we find, that sin has entered to poison its joys and to mar its loveliness; we find, that the family, like the individual, must be sanctified—must experience the purifying influences of religion—must come into possession of the *peace* of the gospel—before it becomes an object

on which God, or angels, or holy men can look with complacency. There may sometimes, it is true, be much that is amiable, where nothing is displayed but the *natural affections*, drawn forth in their native simplicity, or regulated by the forms of refined education. But compared with the *Christian* virtues, shedding their heavenly influence over the family circle, all this loveliness of nature is as the inanimate picture, compared with the living, *thinking*, and acting original. The body may be fair and well proportioned, but the soul—the living image of God—is wanting.

The Son of God came down from heaven to restore the *beauty of holiness* to the *family*, as well as to the individual, and to the larger community. And his religion is the only power which *can* restore it—the only power which can secure in the domestic circle, unmingled truth, and love unfeigned—the only power which can give *reality* and *permanency* to its virtues, and secure to it the abiding presence of God.

My present design is to illustrate the transcendent importance of this religion, by presenting some of the leading characteristics of *the family which is governed by its influence*.

1. Contemplate the *general aim* of its arrangements. The individuals who constitute the religious family, have learned in the school of Christ, that this world is not their home, and that the objects of this world, however splendid or attractive, are not their chief good. They see with an eye of faith, beyond these transitory scenes, an “inheritance incorruptible and unfading.” They behold it as their own; and expect soon to have it in actual possession. Of course, while they faithfully discharge the duties springing from family relation, it is in reference to their Christian vocation, and to the loftier purposes of their being. The regulations which they establish, the plans which they form, the pursuits which they engage in, are all made subservient to the same great object. The spirituality of the individuals is not lost, but habitually cherished and heightened, in their social intercourse. While the blessings of domestic life are duly appreciated, the soul continually stretches onward to its more enduring inheritance. And in this respect, who does not see the immense difference between the worldly and the religious family? The worldly family is formed only for present convenience, or comfort, and is intent only on present acquisitions. Its chief solicitude is to increase its treasures and secure its respectability for time. Its arrangements, and its modes of thinking and acting are all adapted merely to the attainment of some earthly temporary good. There may be decency, there may be refinement, there may be much that is attractive, but you look in vain for any evidence that Religion is the presiding Divinity, or that heaven is the chief object of desire. You see not the domestic altar; you hear not the voice of prayer. The great interests of eternity, if not

wholly forgotten, are regarded only as objects of secondary consideration.

I do not say, that none of this worldliness displays itself in the religious family ; but there, the leading aims and purposes of life are infinitely more lofty than any objects of this world. There, God is acknowledged and enjoyed as a present Deity ; and there, it is made a serious object of life to possess a treasure in the heavens, when this earth is burnt up. There you see the power of religion in every-day concerns—in their *'subserviency*, if I may so express it, to the *spiritual*, as well as temporal welfare of the immortal beings who compose the family.

2. Contemplate the religious family, in what may be denominated its department of education. I here suppose, what is generally true, that children and young persons are forming their characters under its influence. Of course, so long as Christianity is enthroned in the hearts of the elder members, their best efforts will be exerted to train up the younger, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The very principles which made them Christians, their sense of accountableness to God, their estimate of the immortal soul, their knowledge of its sinfulness and consequent exposure to misery, and their own experience of the power of the gospel, will constrain them to be faithful. How is it possible for those who feel as pilgrims on the earth, and whose best treasures are in heaven, to see their own offspring sinfully inclined, and exposed to ruin, without being far more solicitous for their *eternal*, than their temporal interests ? How is it possible that they should not continually watch over them, as the responsible guardians of their immortal souls ? It is *not* possible. No ; in proportion as religion pervades the head or elder members of the family, their youthful charge will be commended to God with tears and prayers. They will be led to the fountains of life—to those sacred scriptures, which are *able to make wise unto salvation*. They will be made familiar with the history, the instructions, and the example of Jesus. They will be taught that they are sinners, and need pardon through the blood of Christ,—that they are rational and immortal beings,—that life, and reason, and opportunity are given them for higher purposes than to gratify appetite, or waste their time in idleness, or to accumulate such treasures merely as perish with the using.

Indeed, there is, perhaps, no one thing, in which the truly religious family departs more widely from others, than in the impressions which it communicates to childhood and youth. In general, it must be confessed, the whole tendency of the education which is given, the example and the instructions, are adapted to the formation of worldly views and expectations only. The child lives and breathes in a worldly atmosphere—every thing about him conspires to impress on his mind, that to be qualified for business, to be rich, and to make a figure in the world, constitute the

great ends of his existence. But it is not, and *cannot* be thus, where the serious resolution prevails, *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord*. No ; a far different direction is given to education. Amidst earthly pursuits, God, religion, and eternity are so far from being forgotten, that they are insisted on as objects of paramount importance. The tender mind is formed and moulded, if I may so express it, under the influence of Christian truth. It is early taught, *not to love the world nor the things of the world*, but to seek an infinitely better and more enduring substance.

3. Contemplate the religious family, in its *every-day pursuits* ; in its *ordinary* habits and dispositions. For the very reason that it is a religious family, acting in conformity to the precepts of the gospel, there, of course, must be *industry* in some useful calling. For to be *diligent in business*, it will be recollected, is enjoined as one of the Christian duties. The constitution of our nature requires it ; and the soul can never be healthful or vigorous without it. Besides, the Christian is taught to consider *time* as one of the most important of his talents ; and he sees sufficient motives for the faithful improvement of it : he *feels* that he has always something to do in promoting his own salvation, or the happiness of those with whom he is connected. But so long as the Christian *individual* is under obligation to be usefully employed, the Christian *family*, surely, must feel itself to be under the same obligation.

And as industry, or a proper improvement of time, is a uniform characteristic of the religious family, so also is *sobriety*. This virtue, in a sense not incompatible with a cheerful spirit, necessarily results from the religion of Christ, understood and felt in all its solemn reality. So long as the family is influenced by the *instructions* and the *example* of Jesus ; so long there will be a sober pursuit of this world ; so long will moderation appear in all its earthly plans and expectations. The desire of wealth or fame, which naturally springs up in the soul, will be checked by the recollection, that the Christian's home is in heaven. And by like considerations the tendency to all excessive indulgence of appetite or passion will be restrained.

Especially will religion guard and protect the sanctuary of domestic life from that desolating sin, the habitual use of intoxicating liquor. No individual, and no family, with any proper sense of God, of the worth of the soul, or of Christian obligation, will voluntarily descend from the rank of rational and immortal beings, for the sake of so sordid a gratification. No ; rest assured, in that lovely circle, where the pure religion of Jesus reigns, the inebriating cup is not permitted to circulate. For how is it possible, that purity and pollution, that spirituality and sensuality should exist together ? I repeat it then, the religious family is, and of

necessity must be, free from the pollution, and from all the destructive influence of ardent spirit.

I may add, too, the religious family, united together by *Christian*, as well as *kindred* ties, disciplined in the school of Christ, breathing the atmosphere of that gospel which is emphatically *peace on earth and good will towards men*, is of course cemented by *love*. All is harmony and peace within its sacred enclosure. Animated by one and the same divine principle, and traveling the same road to Zion, the members of such a family take sweet council together, and are helpers of each other's joy. The all-pervading influence of religion softens the natural asperities of the temper, harmonizes discordant feelings and interests, and secures that delightful intercourse, that happy co-operation, which makes the Christian circle an emblem of heaven. Ah, who that has participated in these pure joys, could ever sigh again for the gay and more turbulent scenes of life?

Thus the religious family, engaged in useful occupation, sober in its habits, and united in affection, passes on from day to day, if not an object of interest to the slaves of fashion, yet an object, surely, on which God looks with complacency; for *there* he sees rational beings, rationally employed; there he hears the voice of prayer and thanksgiving from hearts united to his throne, and penetrated with a deep and abiding sense of his goodness.

4. Let us next contemplate the religious family, amid the sacred employments of the Sabbath. Of course the day is regarded *as sacred*; for God has said, "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*" Nor is the day *unwelcome* to those who know the happiness of living near to God. Far otherwise. No season is so precious to them—none so much desired, as this sacred emblem of Heaven's rest. As the sacred day, therefore, approaches, the family, such as I have described, cheerfully lets go the world, to be in readiness for more spiritual employments. The last hours of the week are not burdened with excessive cares and labors, so that the Sabbath must be employed in mere bodily rest; but there is a gradual withdrawing from the world, a gentle transition from the bustle and fatigues of the week, to the hours which God has consecrated. The blest morning comes. A sacred stillness now pervades the family circle; not the stillness of apathy and sloth, but of solemn reflection—of heavenly thought—thought of Him who created the world with all its grandeur and beauty—of Him, too, who died for the world's redemption. The morning devotions ended, the Bible, or some pious book still engages the attention. The younger members are instructed; or, apart, are treasuring in memory those lessons of heavenly truth, which are to be repeated in the sabbath school. And when the "church-going bell" invites, you see hoary age, and manly vigor, and buoyant youth,

and smiling childhood, together leaving home for the house of God. No slight cause ever detains them from that sacred place. For, while God enjoins, "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," it is also seen, that the practice contributes to the order and well-being of the family. It makes the Sabbath to them a day of interest and improvement, while to others, who waste its sacred hours in sleep or idleness, it becomes a day, of all others, the most irksome. Thus, in secret or public devotion, in the study of the Scriptures, in pious converse, and in meditation on the wonderful works of their Creator and Redeemer, are passed the sacred hours of *that* family, which enjoys the "peace of God."

5. Let us next contemplate the religious family, in its seasons of prosperity, and its seasons of adversity: for, as the wise man has declared, *God hath set the one over against the other.* In *prosperity*, the family, such as I have described, still remembers God—still *acknowledges* him as the source of its blessings—still perseveres in his service, thankful for the good which he bestows, and mindful that he who gave, has always a right to take away. The smiles of Providence and the abundance of earthly blessings, are not regarded here as a warrant for the presumptuous exultation, "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.*" The favors of Heaven are not here made an argument for extravagance, or for reposing on the lap of ease. But it is remembered, that "to whom much is given, of them also will much be required:" and while the religious family enjoys with thanksgiving, the bounties of Heaven, it sends forth its sympathies to those less favored; it pities the poor; it contributes freely for the relief of human misery—never forgetting man's spiritual desolations—never forgetting the millions who know not God. While the elder members of the family seek out objects of charity, and concert such plans of doing good, as enlightened philanthropy suggests, the younger members are often made the almoners of mercy—are nurtured and trained to a heavenly benevolence.

On the other hand, contemplate this same family in its seasons of adversity; for, alas, in this changing world, such seasons will come. It may be, that in the mysterious providence of God, distressing poverty has overtaken them; or it may be, that some loved one, a husband or wife, a parent or child, a sister or brother, is laid on a bed of sickness, is called to endure excruciating sufferings—piercing to the heart of fond relatives:—still, in this house, there are alleviations such as the world knows not; still, it is remembered, that God is the same kind and merciful Father, that he was when he smiled; still the heart flows forth in prayer: and in return is heard that still small voice, "*It is I, be not afraid.*" O, how does religion tranquilize the spirit, and preserve a holy calm even under ills which would seem to admit no alleviation! I see

tears in that afflicted family, but I see, too, the calmness and serenity of heaven. It may be, that some one there has just closed his eyes in death—no more to have part in any thing that is done under the sun. Tears there must be, for he was greatly beloved, and still his memory is precious : but O, how comforting to those who walked with him the same road to Zion, that *their* loss is his unspeakable *gain*. Now, indeed, the religion of the gospel is seen in all its reality, and all its importance, both to the living and the dead.

Lastly, Let us contemplate the religious family, in its final union in heaven.

In this imperfect state of being, it had its cares, its disappointments, its sorrows ; for, blest as it was with the favor of God, it dwelt in a vale of tears. Many were its separations ; many its anxieties. Death, as in every other family, cut off one and another, making breach upon breach, till finally, *all* were gone. But think not that this lovely circle, by whom God was worshipped in the beauty of holiness, are for ever lost to each other. Think not that the friendship begun on earth, and consecrated by religion, ever has an end. No, my hearers, our religion encourages loftier hopes. Its glorious Author himself has burst the bands of death, and thus given a pledge and assurance, that they who sleep in Jesus, shall awake in his likeness, and be received into those mansions which he has gone to prepare. There that pious family shall meet again, *to go no more out for ever*, but, with cherubim and seraphim, to enjoy unmingled happiness and triumphant glory. O, thrice happy family ! Yours was the wisdom to place your affections, not on the riches, or honors, or pleasures, which endure but for a moment, but on things eternal—on God—on holiness—on heaven. You made the *Gospel* the basis of your union. You chose the despised LAMB, as your *Redeemer* and your *Lord* ; and He has fulfilled all his promises—has sustained you through every trial, and planted your feet on the Mount Zion above.

My friends, if there be any thing in the present condition or future destiny of such a family as I have described, which you are constrained to approve ; remember, that both are the result of that religion which is offered to you and to all. Remember, that what it has done for one family, it can do for another ; nay, that it is able to bless *every* house, and to bring every household into the same happy state. And are *you* desirous that your own family should be in possession of Christian privileges and hopes ?—are you desirous, that, when you shall see one and another of its members go down to death, you may have the assurance that their spirits are in glory above ?—are you desirous of meeting them all in that world, where friendship shall no more weep ?—and do you tremble at the thought, that, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire,” you may possibly

share in the dreadful doom denounced against "the families that call not on God's name?"—O, then, resolve now, "AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE WE WILL SERVE THE LORD." Let your prayer henceforth go up as the morning and the evening incense before Him. Let his word be your constant guide. Seek not perishable riches or vain distinctions; but *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and such blessings as God only can give, shall cheer your dwelling, and enrich you for ever.

"FATHER of all, thy care we bless,
Which crowns our families with peace;
From thee they spring, and by thy hand,
They have been, and are still sustain'd

To God, most worthy to be prais'd,
Be our domestic altars rais'd;
Who, Lord of heav'n, scorns not to dwell
With saints, in their obscurest cell.

To thee may each united house,
Morning and night present its vows;
Our servants there, and rising race,
Be taught thy precepts and thy grace.

Oh, may each future age proclaim
The honors of thy glorious name;
While pleas'd and thankful, we remove
To join the family above."

SERMON LXVII.

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THE GUILT AND FOLLY AND PREVENTIVES OF BEING IN DEBT.

ROMANS, XIII. 8.—“*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.*”

THE Bible gives directions concerning the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. The field of the gospel preacher, though limited by Scripture, is wide and extensive. The subjects mostly occupying his attention, because most important, are those immediately connected with the future well-being of the soul. Other topics, however, more secular in their nature, must be occasionally discussed. Whatever tends to ameliorate the condition of human life, to free the mind from oppressive care, to extend the range of its useful exercise, and enlarge its sphere of doing good, seems appropriate to the sanctuary. And God's word, surely, is not wanting in topics of this nature. It teaches us particularly, as to the regulation of human life, the wise improvement of time, and the suitable direction of all our endeavors. It inculcates diligence and industry, prudence and economy. It enjoins on us the duty of providing for our own, and warns against profligacy and extravagance. Among other precepts deemed worthy of divine inspiration, is the one just read:—“*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.*”

This direction is built on the principle of equity, is calculated to prevent much evil, and is intimately connected with mental improvement, and spiritual peace.

I shall attempt,

- I. To illustrate the propriety of the direction in the text; and,
- II. Offer some considerations to secure a compliance with it.

The propriety of the direction will be seen, if we consider,

1. That to be in debt will expose us to defraud others of their just due. Numerous are the casualties of human life. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Death may seize us unexpectedly, before we can cancel the claims which lie against us. Sickness may consume our substance; or a train of adverse circumstances may completely prostrate our worldly affairs; or the dread of bankruptcy may lead us to obtain, on trust, beyond all reasonable probability of ever making payment. In such cases, creditors are wronged. What they

were expecting in the arrangement of their business, or in making provision for their families, is withheld from them. A presumptuous venturing on their forbearance, and on our own hope of gain, has perhaps defrauded them of what was essential to a subsistence.

2. For an individual to be involved in debt is injurious, so far as his weight is felt, to the general interests of society. The condition of any society must ever accord with that of the individuals belonging to it. It will be prosperous or embarrassed, in proportion as they are flourishing or straitened. The individual, involved as to his private concerns, will of necessity be less attentive to public interests, and less liberal for their encouragement. He will feel himself unable to patronize objects or support institutions, however indispensable to the respectability and welfare of the community. He may be tempted entirely to withdraw his support, from what is of vital consequence to the very existence of society.

This is not all. The common habit of plunging in debt, necessarily produces incessant changes in society. Individuals scarcely become domesticated in a place, ere they must leave it to make room for others. Churches are scarcely organized, ere they are separated. Congregations but just become acquainted with their pastors, ere strangers occupy their places.

3. To owe, exposes us to involve our families in trouble and suffering.

Comforts, collected for their subsistence, must be torn from them as the inevitable consequence of vexing and costly suits. What wives have, by industry, made, to clothe their household; what children need, to supply the calls of hunger, or defend them from the inclement season, or to furnish them with the means of useful instruction, is taken away from before their eyes. Often the very utensils of industry are seized, and thus the means of future acquisition precluded. Children, accustomed to mingle in the family circle, and bound together by a thousand domestic endearments, must scatter abroad, as opportunity may present, or occasion require. Husband and wife must be separated, and the limits of a prison-yard set bounds to their intimacy.

4. To involve ourselves in debt, is almost certain to subject us to great and expensive sacrifices.

Those sufferings, enumerated under the foregoing particular, may not, in every instance, be realized. Circumstances may not always combine to reduce the unfortunate debtor to distress, so complete and overwhelming. His substance may not be seized, his family may not be broken, himself may not be arrested. Yet still, to maintain his credit in some degree, and prevent the consequences to which his debts expose him, he must, unavoidably, be driven to perplexing straits. To meet payments according to promise, he must incur new debts by borrowing, and perhaps with the addition of use far beyond the lawful rate; or he must

dispose of his property at a hasty sale, and make large sacrifices in the conveyance. Besides, he must be racked with anxiety, and exhausted with fatigue; must spend time, make journeys, incur expense, neglect his business, and sink deeper and deeper in the calamity of embarrassment. And often, alas! does he rue the day, that he launched himself so readily in the precarious bark of credit.

5. To be in debt, is prejudicial to our improvement in useful knowledge. The mind, to make advances, needs to be quiet and undisturbed. Pecuniary embarrassments tend to ruffle it. In vain shall one, harassed with debt, attempt to compose himself for useful reading, or profitable reflection. His mind will be constantly devising expedients to extricate himself from difficulty, or poring, with melancholy forebodings, over his unpleasant situation. If he be in one of the learned professions, his usefulness must be stationary, if not retrograde. If he be a mechanic or agriculturist, he must content himself with what he already knows. Debt is an enemy to improvement in every situation. It neither allows the means of procuring instructive books, nor time to peruse them, if possessed. Wherever it lays its imperious claims, the mind must unavoidably be denied that regular exercise and aliment, which are essential to its growth.

6. To owe, is destructive of that love, which is binding upon us, one towards another. Love to each other is expressly enjoined in the text. It is particularly mentioned, as an exception to all other debts, from which the Apostle dissuades. Love to our fellow-beings is a debt which we owe them by the constitution and fitness of things; they being partakers with us, of the same nature, the offspring of the same common Parent, the subjects of the same providential government, and probationers for the same eternity. Love to each other, is a debt which we also owe, by the appointment and express command of God. The same precept, which enjoins supreme love to the Creator, directs us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

But how great are the violations of this law, in consequence of debt and embarrassment! The debtor, finding difficulty in meeting demands against him, at first dreads the sight of one he owes. This dread seldom fails to terminate in hatred, in consequence of measures pursued in a course of legal collection. Too frequently, after shunning and avoiding his creditor, and experiencing some vexation and perplexity, he gives free scope to his unfriendly feelings; forgets the justice of the debt, in the unpleasantness of his situation; reasons himself into a feeling of right to withhold payment, so far as he can; and directs his attention rather to the means of avoiding claims, than of canceling them. Too often, through irritation, he will seem to study every thing rather than making payment.

On the other hand, the creditor, being foiled in his expectations, and put to trouble, becomes resentful. He loses his patience. He parts with fellow-feeling. What he claimed, at first, in justice, he now pursues in vengeance. He calls into exercise all the unfriendly passions; and indulges the most rigorous treatment that the law will suffer. Thus are friends often changed into implacable enemies; and those who were bound to love each other, are provoked to exercise a malignant and lasting hatred; and all for not observing the prudential precept of the text.

7. To owe, is unfavorable to those spiritual preparations which are necessary to the future welfare of the soul. The mind, in pursuit of heavenly things, needs to be composed, collected, and in a situation to wait upon God, without distraction. It should be able to command all its energies, in its endeavors after holiness. It requires to be in a condition to systematize its pursuits and devote its attention, free from secular interruption and disquietude. He, who is seeking after immortality and eternal life, should not be obliged to throw down his Bible, or suspend the duties of the family and closet, because of an unwelcome, but urgent call from a creditor. Reason, surely, will very readily decide, whether one, in constant apprehension for his personal safety, in constant fear of the officers of justice, is in a favorable condition to make his peace with Heaven, or enjoy spiritual privileges. In such a case, the soul must be neglected; duty omitted; and marauding care consume all the finer feelings of the heart.

8. To owe, is forbidding to that peaceful and undisturbed *death*, which is desirable. In the hour of dissolution, if ever, we need to be disengaged from all worldly trouble. It is then necessary to direct our undivided attention to those amazing scenes which are just opening to view. But, if in possession of our rational powers, must not the thought disquiet us, that others are about to be injured in their substance by our exit; that we are leaving, for ever, claims unadjusted, and demands unsatisfied; that our affairs are in such a state, as to involve our friends in endless difficulty, and subject them to great embarrassment, through our improvidence? Reflections of this kind, surely, if we are susceptible of feeling, must add peculiar poignancy to death, and cast a gloom over dying prospects.

9. To owe, is in direct opposition to the command of God. This is a consideration paramount to all others. We are bound to keep all God's commandments. And His will on the point before us, is made very explicit in the text. Says the holy apostle, by the authority of inspiration, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.*" And, in the context, he says, "*Render unto all their dues; tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom.*" In saying this, he but responds the words of his Divine Master, respecting the tribute which was exacted by the custom-

officers of Cæsar. "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." It is noticeable, in this remarkable injunction of our Saviour, that rendering to Cæsar the things that are *his*, is inculcated with the same emphasis, as rendering to God the things which are due to *Him*. And in the Levitical institution, God expressly enjoined, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning." It is thus, evidently, the will of our Heavenly Father, that we should not plunge in debt, thereby disqualifying ourselves to deal justly by others. By His direction, we are not only "to love mercy and walk humbly;" but to "*do justly*." This we cannot do, while disregarding the injunction of the text. By needlessly resorting to credit, then, an express divine appointment is wickedly transgressed. Let this thought effectually deter us from the deed. Let it suffice, that *God has forbidden*.

The authority of God, surely, and the various other considerations which have been suggested, sufficiently evince the *propriety* of the direction in the text. I would now then,

II. Offer some considerations, to aid a strict compliance with the direction.

It is not supposed that our observations can apply to all particular cases; that debts, in every instance, can be avoided. They sometimes come of necessity, in consequence of what may be styled the act of God, such as sickness, tempest, or fire. A person may be so impoverished by such casualties, as not to be able to subsist a day without incurring debt.

It ought also to be observed, that there is some distinction in *debts themselves*, with regard to their threatening nature, or injurious tendency. Those incurred in the purchase of real estate, or property which may again be disposed of, without sacrifice, are very different from such as arise from indulging luxury, or procuring perishable things.

What follows will respect, generally, a compliance with the command in the text, without regard to particular cases. And,

1. Remember that debts, however long forborne, or much accumulated, will one day be required. However easy may be the work of involving ourselves; yet the labor and toil of extrication is before us. And although we may esteem the time of forbearance long, and our credit good; yet such opinions do not annihilate claims, nor satisfy the wants of those we owe. More substantial proof of our ability will be demanded. These considerations ought ever to be in view, when we are tempted to incur debt.

2. Remember the worth of time. This precious grant was never made by the Creator, without an accompanying obligation, wisely to improve it. And, however vainly we may pass it away, its loss we shall

afterward most assuredly feel, to our shame and bitter regret. Every moment, idly and unprofitably spent, is at the expense, either of our mental improvement, or worldly substance. Whoever wishes to avoid embarrassment and want, must be economical of time. He must be in his calling, seasonably and steadily. The morning must witness his punctuality, and the day his regular and systematic attention. The man of business is not necessarily required, because of unfavorable weather, to relinquish all employment, and repair to some place of public resort, for company and cheer. His care may be profitably devoted to objects at home, which, in a season favorable to business abroad, might be neglected. And especially, if nothing else require his time, he may very usefully employ it in instructive reading. For knowledge is power, for every purpose. Let these considerations be regarded, then, by every one who would avoid chilling poverty, or vexing embarrassment.

3. Avoid luxury; especially in things of mere *appetite*. Writers of discernment have ever esteemed *this* the most ruinous species of luxury; because, in proportion as it is indulged, the bodily and mental faculties are enfeebled; and in direct proportion as property is expended, or debt incurred in this way, the ability diminishes for replacing it, or making payment. He, then, who would avoid embarrassment, should, above all things, avoid incurring debt in this manner. If he *must* owe, let him owe for things of vital importance; but let his name be written any where as debtor, rather than at the retailer's bar, or the confectioner's shop. Surely *Dr.* is an unpropitious mark in such a place; it is ominous of trouble, and final ruin.

4. Be scrupulous in limiting expenses to the measure of your income. Custom should not tempt us to extend our expenditures beyond our means. Multitudes, by so doing, have closed their worldly career in want and degradation. The vessel, surely, although large, if filled only by pints, must be very capacious, not to be exhausted in time by quarts. If your circumstances be but moderate, you cannot surely think to rival in splendor the really affluent. Far better, and more honorable, to be clad in a plain garb, than to shine in one which our resources cannot afford. What strange infatuation must a temporary splendor exhibit, when it is sure to be followed by poverty, degradation, and wretchedness!

5. Never despise honest labor. The idea that labor is servile and degrading, is palpably erroneous. It is, also, a very dangerous one to be entertained, under a government like ours, where the privileges of all are equal. We have no hereditary lordships to be entailed; no princely estates to be kept unimpaired, by the munificence of a crown. Property, if retained, must be kept by unremitting diligence and enterprise. And the individual who despises labor, the fundamental source of inde-

pendence, must ultimately fail. His means, without this resource, will diminish, and at length become exhausted. It is important then, that every one, hoping to spend his days in comfort, should cherish honorable ideas of labor; and however easy may be his circumstances, or elevated his station, that he should not feel himself above untiring industry. Labor is needful for fallen man. It is necessary for the health of his body, and the vigor of his intellect. It is, also, a salutary preventive of vice, and an efficacious corrective and preservative of morals. And were it more generally regarded in this light, towns, cities, villages, and especially prisons, would exhibit less frequently the sad results of false pride and indolence.

6. Avoid depending on speculation and artifice. These may succeed for a time, and open a door for the rapid accumulation of wealth. But while affluence is rearing itself on such foundations, an undermining process is usually going on. The art which has acquired for *one*, will become the art of *another*, who, in his turn, will circumvent and outreach the long successful adventurer; and the stream, so long flowing into his coffers, will become diverted in its course. Besides, such a life will lead, more or less, to evil company, and to habits unfriendly, both to mental peace and permanent prosperity. And almost certain it is, that the family arriving at opulence in this way, will soon experience a sad reverse.

7. Never neglect the duties and obligations of religion. Without the blessing of God, none can prosper; and without obedience to his commands, none can reasonably expect his blessing. Notwithstanding the attempts which are often made, to explain away the temporal benefits of religion, by showing that the ungodly prosper, while the praying believer lives in penury; yet it will hold good, as a general rule, that the way of religious duty and obedience is the way to worldly competence and lasting prosperity. It is religious duty which confirms us in a sense of justice and honesty, which guards us against temptation, which secures us from the approach of unfriendly habit, which dissuades us from pride, vanity, and extravagance, which teaches us the preciousness of time, encourages us in diligence and industry, and leads to a just estimate of all things. To train men to the regular and successful practice of the arts of civilization, no better method can be pursued, than to train them to a course of religious duty. Hence, this method is ever resorted to, in forming to usefulness and happiness the barbarous and uncivilized tribes of men. The path of religious duty is the only one on which the blessing of God permanently shines. Forsake this, and you will be forsaken. Neglect prayer, and you will be neglected. Disregard the holy Sabbath, and the public worship of God, and adversity awaits you. If not ruined by others, you will be your own destroyers.

8. Ever bear in mind, that *God* is opposed to the habit of contracting debt. This habit is not only wholly at variance with the economy of His providence ; but also, in direct repugnance, as we have seen, to His holy word. Remember, then, that the will of God is counteracted, that the precepts of the Bible are outraged, by suffering yourself to *owe*, beyond your means of seasonable and expected payment. Let this consideration, and the remembrance that God *seeth* you, prevent all extravagance, and waken you to industry. Remember, that in transgressing God's command, you can never enjoy his smile—your life cannot be peaceful, nor death serene, nor His judgment-seat be approached without shame and horror. Let a holy dread of His displeasure, then, affix to this sin such a turpitude of guilt in your view, as shall for ever restrain you from incurring debt, or delaying an expected payment. Let the express injunction, "Owe *no* man any thing," ever bear on your conscience with the authority of Almighty God. For God is serious in his injunctions ; and "*he that offends in one point, is guilty of all*"

Thus have I offered some reasons for the sacred injunction of the text, and some considerations for securing a strict compliance with it.

And now, is there not weight in these reasons and considerations ? and are they not enforced by the highest Authority ? Pause and reflect. Obey and prosper. Use the world as not abusing it. Prudently enjoy, or "freely give," what your honest endeavor, with the blessing of Heaven, may procure. Seek not great wealth ; for "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." Make no display of more than your own resources can command. Render to all their dues. Especially, render unto God the things that are His, by having respect unto *all* His commands. So shall His countenance ever shine on your path ; the world shall be the better for your existence ; peace and hope shall smoothe your dying pillow, and *durable riches* at God's right hand be your final reward. AMEN.

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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OBJECTIONS OBIATED, AND GOD GLORIFIED, BY THE SUCCESS OF
THE GOSPEL AMONG THE HEATHEN.

ACTS xi. 18.—*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

It gives us a peculiar pleasure to accompany the missionaries through those regions, and along the very paths, once consecrated by the residence and the journeys of Christ and his apostles. But how much more interesting to the missionaries themselves, to walk in the footsteps, and stand on the precise spot, where our blessed Lord walked and stood, when upon earth. What mingled emotions must be enkindled in the bosom of the pious pilgrim, while he drinks of the same fountain which afforded refreshment to the Son of God when weary with journeying: and not only this; but enjoys the privilege of gazing on the hallowed place where he became incarnate;—where he first saw the light of this world;—where he closed his eyes in death;—where he arose from the sepulchre;—and where he was parted from his disciples, and ascended into heaven, while in the very act of blessing them. It is no superstition to be tenderly affected by scenes like these: it is the genuine effect of the association of ideas, in minds imbued with the love of Christ. It must have occurred to the attentive reader of the journals of our missionaries, that they often present facts, which bear a strong resemblance to incidents recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: and we are especially struck with this analogy, when the facts occurred in the same place: as, when we read the accounts of their visits to Jerusalem, to Bethany, to Gethsemane, to Calvary, to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, and to the sea of Tiberias; and of their journeys through Samaria to Galilee, and along the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

It is worthy of remark also, that the principles on which the gospel is now

opposed, and its preachers persecuted, are the same which had influence in the days of the apostles ; and that its converts are inspired with something of the same spirit of constancy and inextinguishable zeal which characterized the primitive disciples. There is, moreover, a resemblance in the manner in which the gospel is introduced, and obtains footing. The success of the apostles, on their first visit to a town or city, was commonly small : a single family, or one or two individuals, were often the first fruits of the preaching of Paul or Peter : but these formed the germ, from which a flourishing church soon arose. "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field ; which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The commission which our Lord gave to his disciples was universal in its extent, and couched in terms as perspicuous as could have been selected ; and yet so inveterate were their national prejudices, that they confined their ministry to the Jews and Samaritans. The idea that the church was still to be limited to their own nation, had taken such complete possession of their minds, that even the plenary inspiration of Pentecost did not remove the error. It became requisite, therefore, that a special revelation should be given to the church on this subject ; which was communicated, by a vision, to the apostle Peter, while he was sojourning at Joppa. An angel was, in the first place, sent from God to a Roman centurion by the name of Cornelius, a devout and charitable man, who had his dwelling at Cesarea ; directing him to send to Joppa for Simon, whose surname was Peter ; "and he," said the angel, "will tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The angel himself could have readily informed this man of every thing which he could learn from Peter ; but God chooses that the gospel should be preached by men of like passions with ourselves ; and having instituted the ministry of reconciliation, he has resolved to honor *that*, as the means of bringing the heathen to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation ; and, although they deliver short messages to the saints, they have received no commission to preach the gospel. Cornelius was, therefore, directed to send to Joppa for Peter, who should tell him what he ought to do. But what would Peter think of such a message from a gentile, with whom he had always been accustomed to believe it was unlawful to hold any intercourse ? The same God who had sent his angel to Cornelius, had taken care to prepare the mind of the apostle for this extraordinary communication ; for, while he was engaged in fasting and prayer, in the retirement of the house-top, he saw a vision, the import of which was, that all national distinction between Jews and gentiles was done away, and that the middle wall of partition was broken down. But doubting, at first, what the meaning of this vision might be, he was relieved from all suspense by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, who said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee ; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." Peter, in obedience to the divine command, went with the men, and preached the gospel to Cornelius and to all that were in his house : and the Holy Ghost having manifestly come upon them, he proceeded to receive them by baptism

into the Christian church. These were the first fruits of that glorious harvest of converts, who were, in a short time, gathered into the garner of the Lord from among the gentiles.

Tidings of this extraordinary event soon reached the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, and produced no small surprise and agitation among them; and as soon as Peter was come up, they who were zealous for the Mosaic rites and distinctions, contended with him, and said, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it in order unto them;" and concluded his defence, by saying, "Forasmuch then as God gave unto them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?" "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life."

It is pleasing to observe, how ready these good men were to yield to the truth; and how sincerely they rejoiced, that God had granted repentance unto life, to the gentiles as well as to the Jews.

In accommodating these words to our present circumstances, I will, from them, take occasion to show,

That the manner in which God, by his providence and grace, has prospered the efforts of his church, to extend repentance unto life to the heathen, in our day, ought to silence all the objections which have been made to this benevolent enterprise.

That the success which has attended the labors of missionaries among the heathen, should induce all Christians to glorify God for his great goodness;—and,

That hence it may be inferred, that they should go forward in the good work, with increasing vigor, zeal, and confidence.

I. When it was first proposed to propagate Christianity in Hindostan, a great clamor was raised against the design, by interested men, who pretended that any attempt to change the religion of that people would be attended with civil commotion of the most alarming kind; and that the consequence, in all probability, would be the subversion of the British empire in the East. This objection to missionaries was founded on principles merely political, and, if it had been true, ought to have had no weight with Christians, to prevent them from propagating the gospel for the salvation of men. But when the experiment was made, what was the result? Were the predictions of those wise politicians verified? So far from it, that in no single instance has the attempt by missionaries, to propagate the gospel in India, been followed by the least tumult or civil commotion; and it is a notorious fact, that the immense population of that country has never remained so tranquil and submissive, as since the period of the introduction of missionaries.

But another objection was made, which could have no other basis than indifference to all religion. It was alleged, and strongly urged, that the heathen were contented and happy in the possession of a religion of their own, to which they had been long accustomed, and which was adapted to their genius and climate: and, therefore, that it was not only impolitic, but

inhuman, to disturb their minds with a new religion. The amount of this objection is, that all religions are equally good, and equally safe; and that Christianity possesses no such transcendent excellency as would make it a rich blessing to any and every people. Now, who does not perceive, that this objection, though coming from the mouths of nominal Christians, is replete with the spirit of infidelity? But even on mere principles of humanity, and in relation to temporal happiness, it is capable of the clearest demonstration. from undoubted facts, that Christianity would confer on the heathen more important benefits than can be derived from any other source. Turn your eyes to the horrid system of idolatry which prevails in India, and other heathen countries;—contemplate the multitudes whose lives are sacrificed to the gods of their cruel superstition;—consider the slavish and desolating effects of these false religions upon the minds of all their votaries; not only in eradicating every virtuous and generous principle, but also in withering every kind and amiable affection of our nature: and having contemplated this scene, turn your attention to the bonign influence of the Christian religion, in its tendency to control and mitigate the fierce passions of man; to civilize and refine society; and to cause the obligations of justice and truth to be felt:—and then, without any regard to its divine origin, or its necessity to secure future happiness, ask yourselves, whether benevolence does not require that we should make every exertion to rescue our fellow-men from the horrors of superstition, by inducing them to adopt the religion of Jesus? There exists not upon earth a greater foe to human happiness than Pagan superstition. While the body simply is enslaved, the mind may be tranquil and free, and may enjoy consolations which no external violence can interrupt or destroy: but when the *soul* is held in cruel bondage, all sources of rational pleasure are cut off. And even as it relates to the sufferings of the body, no severer tortures have ever been invented or endured, than those inflicted by conscience, misguided and terrified by superstition. There can, therefore, be no work of greater benevolence, than to rescue our fellow-creatures from this wretched thralldom, by the diffusion of knowledge, and the propagation of just ideas respecting the character of God, and the true nature and extent of human duty. And if we admire the philanthropy of Howard, who devoted his life to the alleviation of the miseries of those unhappy men whose bodies were immured in loathsome dungeons, how can we withhold our cordial approbation of the faithful missionary, who labors in the midst of appalling dangers and difficulties, to deliver men from the intolerable bondage of superstition?

As the apostle Peter silenced all objections to his entrance among the gentiles, by a simple statement of facts, in humble imitation of his example, I would refer to the well-known facts which have occurred in our times, relative to the happy change produced by the gospel in the temporal condition of some of the most wretched of our race. Let the objector impartially consider the melioration of condition in degraded Africans, rescued from slave-ships:—let him ponder the wonderful progress of civilization and good moral habits among the Hottentots, the Caffres, the inhabitants of the Society and

Sandwich Islands, and also among our Cherokees and Choctaws; and he will never be disposed again to bring forward this objection.

But this leads me to the consideration of one of the most plausible objections ever made against Christian missions: which is, that it is impossible to communicate the sublime truths of our holy religion to men in a savage state, or to bring them under the influence of its moral precepts. It was confidently asserted by philosophers, and reiterated by reverend theological professors, that civilization must precede Christianity. These opinions, during the last century, were so often inculcated, and so confidently repeated, that many persons well-disposed to the diffusion of the light of the gospel, received them as undoubted axioms. But how civilization was to commence and be carried on, no one undertook to explain. None appeared to possess zeal enough to go among the savage tribes to civilize them; and thus, as far as these sentiments prevailed, all missionary effort was paralyzed, and a cloud of discouragement cast over every prospect of seeing the heathen brought into a better condition. It was well, however, that all Christians did not fall under the influence of this philosophical delusion: some continued to believe, that the only effectual means of civilizing barbarous nations was, to send them the gospel; and, acting on this principle, they braved the ridicule and contempt of the wise men of this world, and zealously engaged in the glorious work of evangelizing the nations;—a work which, we believe, will never be arrested, until the desired end is fully accomplished.

By mere reasoning, this class of objections could never have been so answered, as to convince those by whom they were made: but God, in his providence, has, by a series of facts, as gratifying as they are wonderful, silenced for ever, as we would humbly hope, these philosophical dogmas, which stood in the way of the progress of the gospel. And it was so ordered, as if on purpose to refute these prevalent opinions, that the first remarkable success in Protestant missions should take place among the most savage and degraded tribes of the human family. The Greenlanders, the African negroes, the Caffres, the Hottentots, the Boshmen, and the wandering aborigines of America, furnished the first trophies of missionary exertion. And to these were soon added, the inhabitants of the islands of the South Sea, and of the Pacific. Certainly, no people more remote from civilization existed in the world, than some of those who have, by missionary labors, been converted to Christianity. And, however uncandid men may depreciate the work, and affect to believe that nothing has been done; yet, in the view of the wonderful reformation wrought, and the extraordinary exaltation of the character, not of a few individuals, but of whole tribes and nations, the friends of missions have just grounds for mutual congratulation and triumph. The problem is now solved, and it is by incontrovertible facts decided, that the gospel is capable of producing its genuine effects on the most barbarous, as well as the most refined, of the human species; and that it possesses the power of civilizing men the most savage. Indeed, if it were not so, the heathen never could be converted to Christianity without a miracle; for we know of no other means than the gospel by which savage ferocity can be subdued, and Pagan igno-

rance enlightened. And if we could communicate the arts and refinements of civilized life to savages, it is not evident that this would at all prepare and dispose them for the reception of the gospel. When the most refined and civilized nations throw away all regard for religion, they become, as the history of our own age attests, the most ferocious of all mankind. Genuine civilization must commence with reformation of heart ; and nothing but true religion is capable of producing this effect.

Another objection, nearly allied to the above, and proceeding from the same quarter, was, that the enterprise was impracticable, by reason of the established prejudices of the heathen. The idea of converting the world to Christianity, has been ridiculed as weak and fanatical. To the philosophic eye of men of reason, there seemed to be no proportion between the means and the end proposed to be accomplished. That a few zealots, unsupported by civil authority, and unpatronised by the learned and the powerful, should think of revolutionizing the religion of the nations of the earth, all of whom are wedded to their own systems of worship, and many of whom by reason of their caste and prejudices are almost inaccessible, was viewed with ineffable contempt, by men who looked no farther than to second causes. And, indeed, if the missionary enterprise be contemplated, merely on the principles on which human calculations of success are usually made, the opinions of such objectors do not appear so very unreasonable. If the special aid of Almighty God might not be hoped for, then the prospect of accomplishing so great an object, by means so feeble and inadequate, would be discouraging enough. But if there be truth in Holy Writ, the conversion of the world is an event decreed in the counsels of heaven ; and there is every reason to believe, that it will be brought about by human instrumentality. And it accords with the known methods of divine administration, in the establishment and advancement of the church, that instruments and means are often selected which appear contemptible in the eyes of the world : and frequently, from small beginnings, the most glorious events are made to follow. Of the truth of this remark, the original propagation of the gospel is a sufficient illustration. But the best answer which can be given to this objection, is, as before, to point to the facts, and to say, SEE WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT ! Behold the wonderful progress of the gospel, in a short time ; and where the obstacles were as great as any that exist elsewhere. Contemplate the strange spectacle of whole nations casting away their idols, and princes and people, the aged and the young, sitting down at the feet of the missionaries, to be instructed in the things which relate to their salvation. I am aware, indeed, that some persons in our country have been pleased publicly to represent the missionary enterprise to be a failure. They have gloried, as if the wisdom of their predictions was now verified ; and as if, indeed, nothing had been accomplished. Now, I know not what these men would consider a successful missionary operation ; but, if the effects produced by the exertions of missionaries in South Africa, in Tahiti and the neighboring isles, in the Sandwich Islands, in many parts of India, and among the tribes of our own continent, can be believed to be events of no importance, then it may be supposed, that

if the world should be converted—if the Jews should be brought in with the fulness of the gentile nations—these incredulous, or rather, uncandid persons, would not believe that any thing was yet effected. With such prejudices we do not contend : they are too inveterate and deep-rooted to be shaken by argument. The facts are before the world ; let every one judge of them as he pleases ; but, in the mean time, the great and glorious work is advancing and spreading, in spite of the prejudice and envy of men. And what is doing in the missionary cause, I doubt not, will, in the eyes of posterity, be viewed as far more important and glorious, than the most considerable political events of our times. Then it will be admitted, that Hall, and Newell, and Mills, and Judson, and Parsons, and Fisk, and Kingsbury, and Stewart, and King, and Bingham, with their faithful coadjutors, did not labor altogether in vain. No ; when the envy and prejudice of the present generation shall have died, the memory of these men will be blessed ; and the simple narrative of their indefatigable labors and patient sufferings, will be read with interest and gratitude, in the four quarters of the world, and in the most distant corners of the earth ; and that, too, when the names of the enemies of missions shall rot in complete oblivion.

The next objection to combined and vigorous missionary efforts, which I shall notice, is, that the time is not yet come—the time for the conversion of the nations unto God ; and that, until God's appointed time shall arrive, although some partial effects may be produced, yet no general or great success will attend missionary efforts, however wisely they may be planned, or vigorously executed. If we were certain that this objection rested on the ground of truth, it would indeed discourage our hearts ; but would not alter our duty, or remove the obligation of the Saviour's command, to "preach the gospel to every creature ;" for, neither the purposes of God, nor his predictions, are made the rule by which we are bound to regulate our conduct. What God requires of us is, to obey his commandments ; the effects which may be produced by our exertions, belong to him, and he will regulate them according to his own good pleasure, and according to his faithful promises.

But this objection may be founded, either on the prophecies, or on the present aspects of Providence. Now, in regard to the first, it may be observed, that the church will probably wait long before she begins her efforts, if she suspend them until an agreement shall take place among expositors, respecting the times and seasons predicted in Scripture. Prophecies are seldom capable of a precise interpretation until they are fulfilled. We also know, that learned men, who have devoted themselves to the study of prophecy, have been egregiously deceived in their most confident predictions of the course of future events. And for ourselves, we believe, "that secret things belong to God, but those which are revealed, to us and our children ;" and that the "times and the seasons" are among the things which "the Father hath kept in his own power."

But considering the objection, as it relates to the present aspects of Providence, we are disposed to maintain that it is destitute of a shadow of foundation. On the contrary, we are persuaded, that almost every thing in the

existing state of the world, proclaims aloud to Christians, in a voice not to be misunderstood, that the door of access to the gentiles is now opened, and that they are required to enter into the fields, which are already white to the harvest. The facilities of propagating the gospel in foreign countries, are multiplied far beyond any conception which our forefathers could have entertained on the subject. Formerly, by reason of the imperfection of naval architecture, the want of astronomical instruments, and the defect of skill in navigation, it was considered a prodigious thing for any one to circumnavigate our globe;—an event, in our days, of the most common occurrence. Not many centuries ago, the art of printing did not exist; all books were produced by the slow process of writing every letter with the hand; and, long since this wonderful art was invented, the ability to multiply copies of the Scriptures, and other books, was extremely limited; but recently, by the improvements of the press, and the application of steam, and other mechanical powers, books can be multiplied almost at will; and at prices far below those at which they could be afforded, previous to the commencement of the present century.

The facility of acquiring foreign languages is also greatly increased in our times. More literary men travel in lands once little visited, and a greater number of those who remain at home, apply themselves to the study of various languages; by which means, teachers of foreign tongues are greatly multiplied as well as the necessary apparatus of grammars and lexicons.

To all which, it may be added, that the intercourse between parts of the earth widely separated, is much more frequent and intimate, than in preceding ages; so that now, there is scarcely an inhabited country or island on the globe, which is not visited by our hardy and enterprising seamen. Missionaries, at present, find no difficulty in reaching the place of their destination. A voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, or Cape Horn, is not, in our day, considered too arduous for tender females.

But there is another weighty consideration which shows that the time for missionary exertion is come; and that is, the fact, that scarcely an effort has been made, by any society, in our day, which has proved abortive. Almost all denominations of Protestants have engaged in this good work, and all appear to be successful. But I have already had occasion to refer to the success of missionary exertions, and will not now dwell upon the subject.

The only other objection to foreign missions which I think it necessary to notice, is, that by the prosecution of this enterprise, we injure the churches at home, and neglect to supply with the means of grace, the vast and increasing population in our new settlements; and that, by our exertions to send the gospel to the heathen, we exhaust those funds, which are requisite for the successful operation of our benevolent institutions; and, also, take away from our destitute churches, some of our best men, whose services at home can very inconveniently be dispensed with. More prominence is given to this objection in the statement, than to the others; because, while *they* spoke the language of infidelity, or prejudice, or at best, philosophy, this speaks the language of pious zeal; and, no doubt, has often proceeded from the mouths of those sincerely attached to the cause of God. And if the effects of foreign mis-

sions were, indeed, such as is here supposed, it would behoove us to pause, and consider our ways, if not to retrace our steps. But I appeal again to facts, and on these we are willing to rest our cause. We say, then, that if the prosecution of foreign missions has actually lessened the resources, or diminished the zeal and vigor of our churches at home, we will cease to urge the subject any longer upon your attention. But how stands the fact? I appeal, now, especially to those who, like myself, are advanced in years. My brethren, has any thing occurred within your remembrance which has given so great a spring to vital piety, in the churches, as the enterprise of sending missionaries to the heathen? Has it not been the means of enlarging the views, and elevating the aims of Christians, in regard to the duty of promoting pious and benevolent objects of every kind? When, before, has so much been done to diffuse religious knowledge, and to extend the means of instruction to the poor and destitute? And who are they who most abound in acts of beneficence towards these objects? Are they not those very persons who are most zealous and liberal in the support of foreign missions? The fact is, that a new and holy impulse has been given to the Christian church, in consequence of this enterprise; and already the churches have been more than repaid for all their sacrifices and contributions for this cause. The waves which have by this means been put in motion, still go forward, with increasing swell, and we cannot anticipate what will be the full effect.

And as to the loss of men, I say, they are not lost—not lost to the American churches. The disinterested and noble act of forsaking their native land and all their affectionate friends for ever, does more good to the church than a lifetime of common labor. It teaches the whole religious community, that Christianity has not lost its original power by the lapse of ages. It casts a dark shade upon the groveling pursuits of this world, and has a mighty tendency to lift the soul up to God. The departure of a few devoted missionaries does not diminish the number of faithful pastors, or laborers, in the home mission;—it increases them manifold. Many a pious youth is led to devote himself to the service of the Lord, in the gospel of his Son, in imitation of the foreign missionaries; and many a youthful heart has received its first permanent religious impressions, from perusing the accounts of the labors of these faithful men. And for myself, I cannot doubt, that the published journals of the missionaries have done us more good, than the labors of their lives would have done, had they continued at home. I hope none will think that I disparage the labors of pastors and home missionaries: this is far from my purpose. They too are engaged in a good work—in the same work;—but their labors are rendered more useful by the existence of foreign missions. The standard of their motives, in entering on and prosecuting their work, has been elevated, by the self-denial of the foreign missionary; so that, they all begin to feel more and more, that they are called to forsake all for Christ; to consecrate every faculty to Christ; and to determine to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; and to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ.

II. The second thing proposed in this discourse is, to take a brief survey of the grounds furnished, by the course of events, in regard to missions, for thanksgiving to God, and for encouragement with respect to the future. When the apostles and brethren, at Jerusalem, heard Peter's narrative of the circumstances of the first entrance of the gospel among the gentiles, "they glorified God" for his goodness in "granting repentance unto life," to those whom they had before considered as abandoned to hopeless perdition. As to numbers, there was, indeed, as yet, but little to boast of; one family only had been gathered into the church; but they viewed this as the first fruits of a glorious harvest. Their eyes were now opened on a new field of labor. Their commission, they now perceived, instead of being confined to the small nation of the Jews, was co-extensive with the world. By this interesting fact, their views of their future work and success must have been exceedingly enlarged. It is not wonderful, therefore, that with one voice, and with one accord, they gave praise unto God, whose goodness and grace appeared so glorious, in granting repentance unto life to the gentiles. And here, I would observe, that the situation of the Christian church now is, in some respects, analagous to that of the infant apostolic church, at the time when this event took place. It will therefore be worth our while to spend a few moments in surveying more particularly, some of the reasons which demand the fervent gratitude of every Christian and of every philanthropist, arising out of the recent missionary operations of the church.

And first, it is a solid ground for thanksgiving, that the friends of Zion have been awaked from their long slumber on this subject; and have been, in some measure, made to feel their obligation to send the gospel to the heathen. It is truly astonishing, that among so many men of eminent piety, as have flourished since the Reformation, so few should have been impressed with the duty of bringing the heathen to the knowledge of the truth. The great reformers themselves seem not to have turned their attention seriously to the perishing condition of the world: but it may be plead in apology for them, that they had work enough at home;—that the obstacles which they met, and the persecutions with which they were pursued, rendered it impossible to concert a plan, or to acquire the necessary resources for such a work. But their successors cannot be so easily justified; many of whom lived at ease, and enjoyed favorable opportunities of commencing the good work of sending missionaries to the heathen: and, especially, it strikes us with surprise, that none were found among the Puritans (a people eminent for piety) willing to carry the glad tidings of salvation to their perishing fellow-men in heathen lands. When two thousand godly ministers were at once ejected from their charges, by the ruthless hand of tyranny, why did not some of them—yea, many of them—turn their faces to lands covered with Pagan darkness? Numbers of them, it is true, sought an asylum in this wide continent, and brought with them the gospel in its purity, the light of which we now enjoy; but although surrounded by Pagans, few seem to have felt the importance of communicating to them the words of everlasting life. Such men as Eliot and the Mayhews will indeed be remembered by the friends of missions

as long as the world stands ; but in the midst of a pious people, and surrounded by faithful pastors, they stood almost alone in their generation, as the advocates for the heathen of this country. And, at a later period, the Brainerds, without the hope of an earthly reward, or even the expectation of being noticed in their self-denying work, wore out their lives in fatiguing and arduous labors for the conversion of the savages of America. And although the name of David Brainerd is now known and honored by many, in the four quarters of the world ; yet, perhaps, during his life, no minister in this land pursued his course in greater obscurity, or with less sympathy and encouragement from his brethren.

But let God have all the glory ; the scene is now happily changed. The United Brethren set the example of missionary zeal, patience, and perseverance. The church of God in Great Britain next felt the sacred impulse ; and the most distant shores now see her sons coming to the heathen, " in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Churchmen and dissenters vie with each other, in holy emulation, to be foremost in extending the knowledge of a Saviour. Other European Christians have not been backward to engage in the glorious work ; and none have labored in this field with more wisdom and success, than the little band of Danish missionaries. America, also, has caught the heaven-enkindled flame ; and hereafter, her missionary exertions will form the brightest pages in her eventful history. The spirit of evangelical missions has, for years, been expanding, and diffusing gradually its benign influence through our churches. Every year witnesses an increase of zeal on this subject, manifested by a more enlarged and active benevolence.

May this leaven still continue to ferment until the whole lump is leavened ! A very small portion of the church are yet aroused to the proper tone of feeling on this subject ; but, for what God has done for us, we are bound with grateful hearts this day to glorify his name.

Another reason why we should gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God, in the review of the missionary events of the last few years, is the increasing ardor with which a large number of Christians have been inspired. Their pious and benevolent affections have not only been increased in intensity, but have been elevated and enlarged, so as to comprehend in their embrace, a much nobler and wider field than before. Formerly, the minds of Christians were occupied altogether with the concerns of their own salvation, and of those immediately around them ; and no one seemed to have his heart expanded with a benevolence which took in the whole world ; but now, the fact is far otherwise. Many have been impressed with a feeling of tender solicitude for the salvation of their brethren of all nations ; and these feelings have gone on increasing in depth and expansion, until they have prompted some to acts of noble munificence, and others to still more glorious acts of self-denial ; so that we now begin to come to some just understanding of the spirit which actuated the primitive disciples of Christ.

Another ground of rejoicing which we have, in the retrospect of missionary transactions, is, that men of suitable character have been provided to carry

on this enterprise. When foreign missions were first spoken of in this country, so low and contracted were the views of some of us, that we could scarcely be induced to believe, that any persons would be found willing to leave all, to take their lives in their hand, and commit themselves to the mercy of a heathen population. I can well remember the emotions of surprise excited in the minds of many serious people, when it was announced that the Baptist missionaries, (Carey and his company,) had actually sailed for India ; and also, afterward, when so many missionaries left England for the South Sea islands. But the impression became deeper, when it was known that a number of young men, in our own land, had devoted their lives to the service of God among the heathen. *Now*, such facts have become so common, that they produce little surprise ; but *then*, it was like a new idea, which, while it startled, enlarged and elevated the mind.

But the point to which our attention should now be turned is, the excellent character, appropriate talents, and devoted spirit of the persons who have undertaken this arduous work. Call into review the missionaries employed by every society, and you will not easily find a brighter constellation of worthies. Some of them have been adorned with eminent gifts, as well as endued with large measures of grace ; and have made acquisitions in literature, which place them on a level with the most learned men of the age : and when we take into consideration the motives by which they were induced to make these attainments, they deserve a rank far more elevated than that to which mere literary men can ascend. The character of the missionaries of the present day has not yet been justly appreciated : by future generations, they will be more highly honored, both on account of their learning, and their benevolent labors.

The missionary enterprise is in itself so noble and benevolent, that when the mind of any man is fully occupied with it, it elevates not only his moral, but intellectual character, many degrees above the point to which it could have arisen in any other pursuit. Is it not a fact, that some of our missionaries, who, if they had remained at home, would never have risen above mediocrity, have manifested a wisdom and energy in their character, which may be justly termed extraordinary ? In composition, few writers of the present day excel some of them, in those qualities which are characteristic of a truly good style. But it should not be thought strange, that the prosecution of an enterprise so great and benevolent, should elevate the character and impart unusual vigor to the intellectual faculties ; for it is a principle of our constitution, that the mind receives its cast and complexion from the objects with which it is conversant, and from the pursuits in which it is engaged.

It also affords good ground for joy and thanksgiving, that there has arisen no discord among the friends of foreign missions, to distract their counsels and paralyze their efforts. Both in Europe and America, the utmost harmony has prevailed among those,—however different in denomination,—who have been engaged in the missionary operations of the day. The little, narrow feeling of party and sect, which has, on other occasions, operated so balefully, has

had no influence here. The missionaries, attached to different societies, and belonging to different denominations, meet in foreign lands, as brethren of the same family. They feel that they are laboring in the same cause, and serving the same glorious Master. With hearty good-will and mutual confidence, they are accustomed to counsel and assist one another, in the prosecution of their arduous work. No where upon earth does the genuine spirit of catholicism more prevail, than among missionaries, and the ardent friends of missions.

While it is convenient for the several ecclesiastical bodies, respectively, to devise their own missionary plans, and superintend their operation, there is no ground for jealousy or suspicion; and there should be no provocation of one another, except to "love and good works." The field is wide enough, and the work ample enough for all; and, under existing circumstances, they can bring forth their resources more effectually, than if they were all united in one body. And it should be felt, and I trust is felt, that the success of one society is the success of all. For the same reasons, there should exist no feeling of rivalry between home and foreign missions. The cause of both is the same, and the love of Christ and his kingdom, is the impelling motive of both, in their various operations. Let then this brotherly love continue, and this harmony ever prevail. In that moment, in which missionary societies begin to contend with each other for influence and pre-eminence, in that same moment, it will be manifest, that the true spirit of missions has departed. And whoever shall have any agency in enkindling discord among the friends of this blessed work, will be guilty of a great offence; and wo to him by whom such an offence shall come. But it cannot, it must not be, that the progress of this work of God should be retarded or hindered, by the petty jealousies of its professed friends. A better spirit prevails; and will, I trust, more and more prevail, until all our sectarian distinctions shall be melted into the complete "unity of the spirit:"—when all the servants of God, "shall see eye to eye;" and the bond of union shall be **TRUTH, PEACE, and CHARITY.**

The only other cause of praise to God, which I shall mention at this time, is, that so many benighted heathen have already been enlightened with the rays of divine truth; and that there is a cheering prospect, that the light which has been enkindled in heathen lands will be diffusive; and that the knowledge of Christ, now received by many, will be handed down to their posterity, to the most distant ages. The success of the gospel among the heathen in our day, considering the small number of missionaries employed, and the formidable obstacles which stood in the way, is truly wonderful. In the islands of the great sea, the word of the Lord has indeed had free course, and is glorified: In Africa, Hindostan, Ceylon, and even among the Burmese, there are converts to Christianity, in opening, softening, and sanctifying whose savage hearts, the power of God has been manifested, as remarkably as in the days of the apostles. Nor should we overlook the numerous instances of sound conversion, evidenced by a holy life, which have occurred among the wandering tribes of our own forests. Of these, some have already finished their earthly course, and, in dying as well as living, have proved the efficacy

of gospel grace, to support and comfort the soul in the most trying circumstances. Who, that knows the value of one immortal being, will not rejoice and glorify God for his unspeakable mercy, in granting repentance unto life, to so many perishing heathen? These fruits are the product of the humble and painful labors of your missionaries: but they are not the harvest, they are merely the first fruits. The precious seed which has been sown shall not be lost: it will hereafter spring up abundantly, and gladden the hearts of all who love Zion, and pray for her prosperity.

The past success of missionary labors ought not to be estimated so much by the actual number of converts, as by the *preparation* made for future and more extended operations. The Holy Scriptures have, by the diligence and learning of missionaries, been translated into many different languages; and are now in the progress of wide and rapid circulation. Tribes, destitute of a written language, before they were visited by your missionaries, have been taught to read, and already begin to peruse the wonderful works of God, recorded in the Bible, in their respective tongues. Thousands of heathen children are now collected in schools, through the assiduous labors of missionaries, and are daily taught lessons out of the lively oracles. Native teachers have been raised up in many places, and are now engaged in proclaiming a crucified Saviour to their deluded countrymen. Surely, these are not the effects of mere human exertion; but God has been with his faithful servants. He has, in much mercy, bowed his heavens and come down, to aid and bless their labors; and has, through their instrumentality, "granted repentance unto life to the gentiles." They have received the same spirit of faith and obedience which is given unto us; and now rejoice in the name of Jesus, as we do; and place all their confidence in his atoning blood. Have we not reason, then, to exult? and ought we not, without ceasing, to praise and glorify the name of God, the maker of heaven and earth?

III. In conclusion, I would say, that having so much cause of thanksgiving from a retrospect of the past, it behooves us to be animated with renewed zeal and courage, in the further prosecution of this great work. The way of the Lord is made ready, even a high way for our God. The most appalling difficulties have been encountered and overcome; Jordan is already passed, and the land of promise lies before us; while behind, there is nothing but a barren wilderness. The Macedonian cry, COME OVER AND HELP US, is heard from a thousand tongues. Your missionaries most earnestly beseech you to send them aid: not because they are weary of their work, but because the harvest is too great for them to reap. Their most painful feelings arise from their inability to satisfy all the importunate demands made upon them for instruction. Only cast your eyes on the Sandwich Islands—behold the ardor with which knowledge is there sought, by the high and low, by princes and people, by the old and the young. Methinks I see the withered hands of the aged, stretched out to us, in earnest entreaties that we should send some to teach them the way of salvation before they sink into the grave, shrouded in all the darkness of heathenism. The multitudes of dear children, who are pressing into your schools, and the half of whom cannot be accommodated, seem to send across

the wide waves of the ocean, a piercing cry for more missionaries—more teachers—more books. And while this is the condition of a part of the heathen world, of which we, as a society, have taken solemn charge as our own peculiar field of labor, shall we be contented with what has already been done? How can we be at ease, or suffer this subject of powerful interest to pass away from our thoughts, for a single hour? An individual cannot do much, but the combined efforts of many can accomplish all that is wanted, so far as relates to funds. Now is the time for the wealthy to invest their money to the best advantage. Now, they have a precious opportunity of making to themselves friends, by means of the unrighteous mammon. Now, the man whose heart deviseth liberal things, may make such an appropriation of his riches as will produce a blessed gain to many and to himself through eternity. Why have we not at least a hundred missionaries in the Sandwich Islands? Are they not needed? No one can dispute it. Are there no more pious men and women, who are willing to devote themselves to this service? Doubtless there are hundreds, willing to go, who might be useful in that field; if not as public preachers, yet as teachers of youth. What then is the obstacle? I am ashamed to mention it. It is the want of adequate funds. Will future generations credit the account? Will it be believed that one thousandth part of the sum spent by serious Christians in acknowledged superfluities, was sufficient to support all the missions in the world: and yet that it was found impossible to induce them to consecrate this small portion of the goods which God gave them, to the honor of his name, for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the salvation of immortal souls! How they who owe themselves to the Lord Jesus, and who have been bought with the price of his invaluable blood, can withhold any thing which his cause needs, we cannot understand. Dear brethren, if you ever mean to act with zeal and energy in this work, now is your time. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; it is, therefore, high time to awake out of sleep. Some of us will soon have made an end to all our earthly labors. Perhaps before another meeting of this Board, some of its present members will have been called to give up the account of their stewardship. If we have any remaining duty to perform, in aid of foreign missions, let us address ourselves to the work without delay. Since our last annual meeting, this Board has been deprived by death of three of its venerated members;* one of whom was among the youngest of our number; and it deserves to be remembered, that we are now met in the house in which our amiable, enterprising, and accomplished brother, was wont to lift up his voice in the compassionate warning of sinners, and in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. May each of us who survive, be ready to welcome our summons to another world, if we should be called away before the expiration of another year.

But, my beloved brethren, while we live, let us be found diligently and faithfully engaged in our Master's work. Let us gird up our loins, and be found watching and laboring, when our Lord shall come. And those of you who have wealth to account for when you stand before the judgment-seat of

* The Hon. John Jay, Hon. John Hooker, and the Rev. John Chester, D.D.

Jesus Christ, make, I beseech you, that disposal of it, which you have reason to believe would be pleasing in his sight. If any of you are meditating in your hearts, to offer something to the Lord, in a way in which it may be beneficial to the cause of Christ, remember, I entreat you, the hundreds of millions, who are perishing for want of the bread of life. Defer not the execution of your pious and benevolent purpose, until you shall be under the necessity of resigning every thing into other hands. Testamentary charities are useful ; but they are often suspicious as to their motive. It is giving when we can enjoy our property no longer, and when it can scarcely be called our own. What proportion of their property or their income Christians should devote to the peculiar service of God, we presume not to prescribe. Let every one consult the suggestions and promptings of his own benevolent feelings, "and as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give ; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." The temple of God was reared of old, only by free-will offerings, and the spiritual temple must now rise in the same way. We present no motives to provoke you to liberality, but such as are truly Christian. But we will say, that they will be blessed indeed, to whom shall be granted such love to Christ, and such benevolence to men, that they will cheerfully offer, not merely a part, but **THE WHOLE** of what they possess, for the furtherance of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the world. And this would not be a new thing under the sun ; for, in primitive times, many, out of love to Christ, gave up all their possessions, that they might serve him more entirely. And let those of us who have neither silver nor gold to give, be careful to bestow such things as we have ; and which may be much more precious than worldly treasure. Especially, let us be mindful to pray for the prosperity of Zion and the peace of Jerusalem ; and give no rest to our covenant-keeping God, until he has fully given to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The fervent, inwrought, united, persevering prayers of the true Israel of God, shall at last be the effectual means of accomplishing the great object which we seek to promote, and which Jehovah has so repeatedly promised to his church, in the latter days.

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LXIX.

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A DREADFUL MEETING.

ISAIAH xlvii. 3.—*I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.*

IN this chapter is foretold the sudden and awful destruction of Babylon. She had said in the pride and stoutness of her heart, "I am, and none else beside me: I shall be a lady for ever: I shall not sit as a widow; neither shall I know the loss of children." She trusted in the multitude of her counsellors, in the greatness of her wealth and power, and in the terror of her name. Long time had Jehovah borne with her idolatries, and with her insolent defiance of his arm. But now he was about to display the glory of his power, and the terrors of his justice, by casting her down from the pinnacle of prosperity, and making her utterly desolate. Wearied out with her profligacy and sorceries, with her horrible impiety and cruelties; he would soon stir up all his wrath for her destruction: and thus he addressed her in the text; *I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.*

Little did Babylon think with whom she now had to contend. God himself was about to meet her, not in the vain confidence of a man, not with an arm of flesh, not with the sword and battle-axe; but he was coming with the power that made the worlds; to throw down her walls in his fury, and to make her pleasant places the habitation of dragons. This was no empty threat. It was carried into full and fearful execution. Babylon was suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. All her pride was brought down as in a moment. Her mighty men were dismayed, and melted away. Her riches were given to the winds. Her princely merchants were scattered. Her children went into captivity: and so entire was her destruction, that for many ages past, it has been a matter of uncertainty, where her proud palaces and battlements stood.

Thus has it fared, also, with the overgrown pride, and wealth, and power, and wickedness, of other nations; and thus will it fare, sooner or later, with all, who, like Babylon, Tyre, Carthage, and Rome, exalt themselves

against Him who sitteth in the heavens. Thus also will it fare, at last, with every impenitent sinner. There is a time of vengeance, as well as of mercy; a day of punishment, as well as a day of salvation. God will not always wait upon his enemies, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" but will at length whet his glittering sword, and his hand will take hold on judgment. He will not always stand by and see his power defied, his grace despised, his law trampled under foot, his gospel treated with indifference, his Son rejected, and his Spirit resisted. He will, when his patience is exhausted, clothe himself with vengeance: he will meet his enemies, but *not as a man*. This is a very interesting and solemn thought, which it will be my object to illustrate in the present discourse.

1. When men are about to meet their enemies, it is generally their policy to keep up the show of peace and friendship as long as they can; and to make their preparations secretly, so that when they strike, the blow may fall without warning,—without affording any time for escape. But it is not in this manner that God meets his enemies. He gives them warning upon warning. All his preparations and approaches are made in the clear light of day. Nothing that he intends to do, in the way of punishment, is concealed from those who are exposed to his righteous displeasure. He tells them, that he is angry with them every day: he commands them to throw down their arms, and submit to mercy. He charges his ministers to cry in their ears, "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." No poor sinner, as he sinks in the blackness of despair, will be able to say, "God has deceived me: I thought I was safe: He never told me that he was angry: He spoke complacently: O that I had been warned: O that my danger had been pointed out; then would I have fled from it; then would I have made peace with God, and avoided this place of torment." No, my friends, the sinner will never be able to plead his excuse in such language as this. His own conscience will testify against him, that he was warned, but would not hear.

2. God does not meet his enemies in vengeance, till he has tried every means to recover and reclaim them. The crime of rebellion is commonly visited, by earthly rulers, with immediate and condign punishment. They do not, when they have power to punish, permit their authority to be contemned, month after month, and year after year, still employing new arguments, threatenings and entreaties, to reclaim their revolted subjects. They gird on the sword at once, and the rebellion is crushed.

Now, how differently from all this, does God deal with his sinful and rebellious creatures. With what patience does he bear with them. With what compassion does he warn them. With what meltings of mercy does he invite them to return to their allegiance. How slow is he to anger; how ready to pardon; how reluctant to punish. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear. O earth: for the Lord

hath spoken,—I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Turn ye, turn ye, *why will ye die?*” “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?” “To-day, even to-day, after so long a time, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Such is the language of forbearance and entreaty, in which God calls upon sinners to repent, that his anger may be turned away, and their sins be blotted out. And what could he say more? Was ever such patience manifested, slighted, and finally exhausted? What other sovereign ever waited upon rebels in this manner? When did ever insulted and abused majesty manifest such reluctance to punish?—such amazing forbearance?

3. God never meets his enemies in vengeance, without a just and sufficient cause. Men are capricious and vindictive: they often take fire at the most trifling provocation; and when they have power to punish, they exercise it upon the guiltless, or they punish the guilty with unreasonable severity. But it is not so with Jehovah. Sinners have given him the greatest reason to be angry: they richly deserve all that he has threatened; for what have they not done?—They have taken side with his grand adversary; they have insulted his majesty, and despised his authority: they have revolted from him, and they refuse to return to their allegiance: they have slighted his bounty, set at nought his counsel, and despised his reproofs: they have turned away from the cross with contempt, or at least with indifference: have stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts. These things sinners have done, and He kept silence. And what more, to provoke the Majesty of heaven, could they have done, short of aspiring to the throne itself? Is not here sufficient to excite God's holy displeasure? Is it any slight offence which wakes up his fearful indignation? Will not his throne be guiltless, when he cometh to execute vengeance upon his enemies, and to reward them that hate him?

4. It often happens that men, when they go forth to meet and punish their enemies, are actuated by private resentment. They seek the gratification of the worst of passions; they thirst for blood; and will not be pacified, till they have attained their object. But it is far otherwise that God meets even his most incorrigible enemies. His anger is infinitely removed from that which burns in the breasts of his fallen creatures. He has no private resentment to gratify, no by-ends to answer. He acts as a moral governor; as guardian of the interests of the universe. He punishes, not for the sake of inflicting misery, but to vindicate that law on which the well-being of worlds depends. He punishes the guilty, to deter others from the like revolt, and to insure the safety and happiness of obedient subjects. Infinite benevolence is as much concerned in

punishing the guilty, as it is in rewarding the obedient. It is true, that punishment is his "strange work." He pities, even when he strikes; and would spare the criminal, if the highest good of his kingdom would permit. Thus, instead of exulting over his enemies in the hour of their destruction, having waited upon them with long forbearance, he still manifests his infinite benevolence, when he visits their transgressions with his vengeance.

5. When a man goes out to face his enemy, the result of the meeting is often extremely doubtful: he may utterly fail of his object; he may perish in the dreadful ambush, almost at his own door: or he may, when far advanced, be defeated, and driven back in disgrace, and find it impossible to defend himself, even on his own ground: or, if successful at first, the tide of victory may turn against him: and, instead of taking his enemy captive, he may himself be led into captivity. Such are the chances of war, when one king goes forth to measure his sword with another.

But it is not thus that God will meet impenitent sinners. O no: if there was any hope of resisting his arm, the thought of meeting him would not be so dreadful. But when "the great day of his wrath is come, who shall be able to stand?" "What is the stubble before the flame?—what the chaff before the whirlwind?"—what the resistance of an insect to a falling rock? O think, who it is, that will one day come out in vengeance to meet and crush all his enemies! "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing:" "He standeth and measureth the earth: he beholdeth and driveth asunder the nations." "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, but wo unto him that striveth with his Maker." As all resistance will be perfectly hopeless, so it will be impossible to fly from his avenging arm. The wings of the morning, or of thought, would here be of no avail: for even with these, it would take a whole eternity to flee from God's presence.

6. Men sometimes change their minds when they go forth to meet their enemies: and then they spare those whom they meant to destroy. But "God is of one mind, and who can turn him?" As he is always in earnest when he threatens, and never comes out in wrath till infinite patience is exhausted—so when he does meet his enemies, it is with an unalterable determination to crush them. No one ever yet escaped by a change of the divine purpose; none ever will. What God threatens to-day, he will not revoke to-morrow. For "hath he said, and will he not do it?—hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" His threatenings, indeed, as well as his promises, are conditional. But these conditions have their limits: they must be complied with in time: they do not reach a step into eternity. The sinner must repent; the rebel must submit unconditionally in the present world. He must embrace the Savior before his term of probation expires. If he does not, God will meet him in vengeance, and will in no case turn his wrath into mercy.

7. Men sometimes, when they undertake to crush an enemy, leave *the work unfinished*. They do not take away all his strength. In time

he may perhaps revive, and find himself in a condition to take the field with better prospect of success. But it is not thus that God will deal with his enemies. What he does, he will do once for all. Wherever vengeance strikes, the blow will be fatal. Whom God undertakes to crush, nothing can save. However haughty the rebel may be while the lightning sleeps, he will be instantly blasted by its thunder.

Lastly ; after an earthly prince has subdued his rebellious subjects, and laid them under his high displeasure, he may be moved by their entreaties and sufferings, to release them from prison, and restore them to favor. But God will never show favor in another world, to those who refuse submission to him in this, and die with arms in their hands. "Behold now is the accepted time." But when God shall have cast the impenitent into hell, the last ray of light will be extinguished for ever. No tears, no supplications, will then avail. Instead of mercy's sweet voice to cherish some faint and far distant hope, they will hear the insulted Majesty of heaven say, "Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD : they would none of my counsel : they despised all my reproof : therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." What would not the rich man have given for deliverance from the raging flame ? or even for a drop of water to cool his tongue ? But no ; he had enjoyed all his good things ; he had sinned away his day of grace ; and there was a great gulf fixed. Thus it will be with every sinner, who dies impenitent—who dies without faith in Christ ; as the Savior himself declares : "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Yes, my friends, there is "a fire which shall never be quenched," there is a "worm that never dies." Into that fire will every incorrigible enemy of God be cast ; the eternal gnawings of that worm every such enemy will feel.

And is it thus, my dying fellow sinners, that God will meet and destroy them that hate him ? Is he in earnest when he says, "I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man ?" Will he certainly execute his threatenings ? Will sinners find it impossible either to resist or to escape ? O who can conceive, what rending agonies wait on the single word *vengeance* ! The anger of an earthly monarch is sometimes terrible ; and how much more his vengeance ! But what is that to the vengeance of the King of kings ! The one is but the indignation of a dying worm,—the other the consuming wrath of

the Almighty. And to all the fierceness of that wrath, fellow sinner, art thou every moment exposed. God will meet thee, and who can tell how soon? How then canst thou sleep? How is it possible to be stupid? Why not rather take warning, and escape the burning tempest? Why linger on the plain over which the gathering storm is reddening? When wilt thou be wise? When wilt thou lay these things to heart, and cry for mercy? Soon it will be too late. The door of heaven will be shut; and the door of hell be closed upon thee for ever. O "who among us can dwell with the devouring fire?—who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

SERMON LXX.

By HEMAN HUMPHREY, D.D.

SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY.

I. THESS. v. 22.—*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

THIS, like our Savior's golden rule, is an injunction which every person ought to carry in memory, wherever he goes. Our exposure to temptation and sin is constant. Not an hour of our lives is free from danger. Through the combined influence of our own sinful propensities, and the exciting causes which every where surround us, we are continually liable to transgress God's perfect law.

The eyes of our fellow-men, in like manner, are always upon us. They may be friends, or enemies; the children of this world, or of the kingdom: but it is certain that our example, whether good, or bad, will have an influence upon many, and may either save, or destroy some.

The text includes two ideas. First, it requires every person most scrupulously to avoid whatever appears to him sinful, or even of doubtful character. And secondly, as far as he can, to shun whatever may carry the appearance of sin to others, even where the motive is right, and the action, in itself considered, would be entirely unexceptionable. These two ideas lie at the foundation of what I shall offer in this discourse.

It is obvious, at a glance, that the apostolic injunction, *Abstain from all appearance of evil*, is much broader, and strikes much deeper, than the most perfect human legislation. In the spirit of the divine law, it looks through all disguises, into the bosom; into the secret motive. For, to avoid every kind of sin, is to regulate the thoughts and affections, as well as the life. To *abstain from all appearance of evil*, is to shun, not *only what we know* to be wrong, but what we *suspect* may be so; and

what is liable to be regarded as sinful by others. Human prohibitions must always have their definite limits ; and having fixed these limits, you may caution me not to venture too near them, as earnestly as you will ; you may remonstrate, you may entreat, you may command ; but you cannot guard the approaches, you cannot fence up the *avenues* to transgression, by any positive enactment. You can say to me, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further ;" but you cannot hinder me from coming to the line which you have drawn. You may promulgate your laws against gaming, drunkenness, theft, extortion, perjury, and the like ; but you can never tell me in your statute book, that I must not only keep within bounds, but avoid all *appearance* and *suspicion* of transgression. Human legislation can never occupy that doubtful territory, which lies all along between what is manifestly right, and palpably wrong, in the feelings and conduct of men.

But there is no such imperfection in the government of God. His law touches every spring of moral action. It prohibits not only what is acknowledged on all hands to be wrong ; but what has the *appearance* of it. We must not pass over the line, nor heedlessly approach it. We must not transgress the law in fact, nor seem to transgress, if we can help it. We must stand acquitted, not merely by our own consciences, but, as far as practicable, by all who may be in a condition to judge of our conduct. Here, if I mistake not, are considerations of immense practical importance, which have much less influence than they ought to have in the Christian church.

The duty of avoiding whatever is positively sinful, and is known to be so by all parties, is seen instantly ; but the reasons of our being required to abstain from all appearance of sin, are not so obvious. Many a tender conscience has been perplexed here. Many a sincere Christian has thus communed doubtingly with his own heart—"Why this more than legal strictness ? If I shun every thing which is sinful in itself, why should I be required to stand yet further back ? What harm, or danger can there be, in my approaching the line, or even seeming to pass over it, so long as I actually keep upon the right side ?" In reference to such inquiries, let the following considerations be seriously weighed.

1. We are bound to abstain from all appearance of transgression, because actions indifferent in themselves, or safe for us, may become positively criminal, by leading other men into sin. Of this we have a striking illustration in the eighth chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. A question had arisen, whether it was lawful to eat the flesh of those animals which were offered in sacrifice to idols ; and we gather from the Apostle's answer, that in itself considered, it was perfectly lawful. No idolatrous consecration of food could either so sanctify, or pollute it, as to render it unfit for the common use of the table. But then, some of the Corinthian professors were manifestly inclined to carry their liberty in this matter too far. By eating the sacrifices as common

food, in the temples of the heathen, and before the very shrines of the idols, they trifled most hazardously with the prejudices and scruples of their weaker brethren. The idol indeed was nothing ; the most solemn consecration was nothing ; and the more enlightened and established members of the church might, perhaps, with a clear conscience, and without personal danger, eat the sacrifices as freely as they did any thing else. This affectation of superior knowledge and firmness, however, could in general do no good ; and it might endanger those who were most confident of their own safety. But supposing it did not endanger them at all ; supposing their eating, or not eating, was to them, in itself considered, a matter of entire indifference, still, there was another view of the subject, which they were not at liberty to disregard. Some of their brethren, whose faith was still weak, and who were not yet entirely free from heathen bias, might, by following their example, fall into dangerous temptation. The eating, of one distinguished and influential member of the Church, in an idol's temple, might induce ten others of less knowledge and stability, to set aside the scruples of their own consciences, and expose themselves to serious injury, if not to final apostacy, by similar indulgences. But no member had a right thus to " place an occasion of falling in his brother's way." On this point the apostle is very earnest and explicit. " Take heed," says he, " lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, set at meat in an idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols ? And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died ? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend," (not if meat *offend* my brother, but if it *make*, or *cause* him to offend,) " I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Here is a solemn and dignified rebuke, enforced by a noble, a disinterested, a truly Christian resolution. Perhaps Paul never appeared greater than here. Rather than mislead the weakest and humblest believer, he would go to the extreme point of self-denial. He would wholly abstain from any, otherwise innocent indulgence, not for a month, or a year, but to the end of time.

This goes fully to establish a very important general principle, which it becomes every professor of religion to regard with a trembling conscientiousness. It binds you to submit to the greatest self-denial, rather than, by asserting your liberty, to bring in jeopardy the soul of your weakest brother. This great principle admits of innumerable applications. Thus, for example, whenever you are invited to attend a public festival, or to go into a large party, or to indulge yourself in any amusement ; whenever you think of doing any thing upon the sabbath, such as writing a serious letter, or ordering a warm dinner, or going to the next parish to preach, or to hear preaching, two questions are to be

settled. First, is the thing proposed, or contemplated, in itself lawful and safe? Secondly, if it be lawful and safe for you, will your example endanger the conscience and the soul of any brother, or sister, who is not so well instructed, and fortified against temptation as you are? Both these points must be well settled before you proceed a single step.

You may imagine yourself to be so deeply rooted and grounded in the truth, so effectually girt about with the armour of righteousness, as to be in no danger from the flowing and sparkling convivialities of the feast, or the ball-room; in no danger of profaning God's holy day, by the indulgences just specified. But are you sure that such things are in themselves lawful? Can you prove it from the Bible? You will probably find it a harder task than you imagine. And if you could, it is one thing for an indulgence to be lawful, and another for it to be safe and expedient. If you have no fears, then I say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." But suppose every thing to be clear so far; suppose you could rise up unharmed from the twentieth, or fortieth toast, on a fourth of July, or go into a ball-chamber and come out with every Christian feeling in vigorous exercise, can your weaker brethren do the same? Would they be safe in following your example? If not, then the question is settled. For Paul does not allow you, or rather, the Holy Ghost, whose amanuensis Paul was in this matter, does not allow you thus to rise against your brethren, and wound their weak consciences.

2. Professing Christians, of enlarged views, are bound to give great heed to the scruples and remonstrances of their weaker brethren, in regard to many unessential points of Christian practice. I am aware, that we here stand upon very delicate, not to say difficult ground. A brother may entertain extremely contracted, and even erroneous views of Christian liberty. He may undertake to compass you about with restrictions which are not found in the Scriptures, and may be grieved a hundred times in a year, without any good and sufficient reason. He may be jealous over you with something more than a godly jealousy: may be ready almost to rebuke your every smile, and may think he discovers the workings of pride in the fashion, or quality, of every article of your furniture and apparel; and in the adjustment of every lock of your hair.

Now, I will not say, that in every such case, the more enlightened members of our churches are bound to surrender that liberty where-with Christ has made them free. Much will depend upon circumstances, and upon the character and temper of the brother who is offended. He may be perfectly sincere and eminently pious and humble, or, on the other hand, all his griefs and complaints may originate in secret envy, or discontent with the allotments of Providence. A professor of religion may verily think that he does well to be grieved with his brethren, on account of their too great conformity to the world in dress, in manners, in their general style of living and the like, when a little self-examination might be sufficient to convince him, that he has still greater reason to

mourn over the pride and jealousy of his own heart. In short, it is possible for a brother in the church, to be altogether unreasonable in his scruples and his demands. He may choose to find something wrong in the most innocent, or indifferent action ; and to be hurt every day where no harm is intended, and no offence ought to be taken. Now, to admit that an individual of such a temperament may bring a whole church into bondage ; to say that two or three hundred members, or that fifty members, are bound to conform to his standard, to yield implicitly to all his demands, would doubtless be carrying the matter quite too far. For no man has a right thus to " lord it over God's heritage ;" thus to fence the church about with unscriptural jealousies and restrictions.

But on the other hand, we are required to regard the feelings, and even the prejudices and extreme scrupulousness of the weaker brethren, with great tenderness and indulgence. Cases often occur, in which we are bound to yield the point, and deny ourselves some innocent gratification, because we cannot otherwise avoid the appearance of evil ; cannot satisfy the conscientious scruples of perhaps some of the most pious, though not the most enlightened, members of our churches. It is in this way, that the strong should " bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please themselves." And the man who revolts at this doctrine, who will not bear with what he believes to be the weaknesses of his brethren, who will not for their sakes deny himself in any thing, but who insists that they have no right to be offended, and declares that he will follow his own inclinations instead of yielding to their prejudices and coming down to the level of their sensitiveness ; such a man may hold a high station in the church, and may have made great advances in theological science, and may possess many estimable qualities of heart and intellect ; but one thing is certain—he is not like the apostle Paul. *He* says, " All things are *lawful* for me, but all things are not *expedient*. All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's. Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Now the man who acts upon a different principle, has not the spirit of a Christian. He is proud and self-willed, and in all probability self-deceived. He seeks his own pleasure and profit, and not the edification of the body of Christ.

3. It is only by abstaining from all appearance of evil, that an unblemished Christian character can be maintained in the sight of the world. My meaning may be illustrated by the following incident in the life of Christ. " And when they, (*i. e.* he and his disciples,) were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter and said, doth not your master pay tribute ? He saith, yes : and when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, what thinkest thou, Simen ? Of *whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute ? Of their own*

children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him; of strangers. Jesus saith unto him; then are the children free: *Notwithstanding*, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them, for me and thee." In this case, our Lord, after showing, that according to national usage, (he being a native citizen,) they had no right to exact the tribute, yielded without hesitation to the demand. His refusal might possibly have carried the appearance of parsimony, or of disobedience to the constituted authorities of the land; and any such construction, he would not give his enemies the opportunity of putting upon his conduct. In the same spirit are the following exhortations of the apostle Paul. "Provide for honest things, *not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*" This last is a very remarkable injunction, and goes the whole length of the principle which I am laboring to establish.

According to this rule, in all our intercourse with the world, we are to consider not only what is honest and right in the sight of God, but what is so in the sight of men. As we must never transgress any law, or come short in any duty, so likewise we must not, if we can help it, *seem* to transgress, or come short. We must be honest in the sight and judgment of the world, as well as honest in fact. It is not enough for a professed follower of Christ, that he can vindicate himself in a court of justice, or sit down and convince any candid mind, that every suspicion which may be against him is unfounded. No; this may do for a man of strict worldly honesty, but it is not enough for a Christian. His integrity ought to stand out in such bold relief, everywhere, that it may be distinctly recognised at a glance. He should on no account fail of letting his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father in heaven. Cases will often happen, especially with men in active and extensive business, where, owing to circumstances beyond their foresight, or control, there will be the appearance of overreaching, or hard dealing, though every thing is perfectly honest in fact. And in such cases where the sacrifice of property is not too great, it ought cheerfully to be made, rather than bring reproach upon the Christian name, and thereby prejudice sinners against religion, to their own eternal undoing.

4. We, as professing Christians, are bound to maintain the most scrupulous circumspection in our deportment, to keep back others from presumptuous sins. With whatever indifference, or scorn, the wicked may affect to look down upon evangelical religion, and whatever sneers they may cast upon serious professors, they have a conscience, and they cannot always keep it under the power of opiates. It will sometimes whisper in their ears, when they are alone, or on a sick-bed, or at the grave of a friend, and tell them that religion is true; that the Bible is God's book; and that they can never be safe without an interest in his

promises. At such times, they narrowly watch the example of professing Christians, and are influenced to a much greater degree by what they observe, than they are willing to admit, or than they are aware of themselves. If they see the divine spirit and precepts of the gospel embodied in the lives of its professors, they are convinced and kept back from open transgression. But if, on the other hand, they can see little, or no difference between the church and the world, and especially if those who bear the Christian name disgrace it by levity, and manifest insincerity, their consciences are kept quiet, and they are greatly emboldened in sin. Professors of religion, they will always believe, are bound to be more strict, more circumspect, than any other class of men; and they will of course content themselves in falling below the standard which they observe in the church, however depressed that standard may be.

Thus, if after solemnly binding ourselves to "holy living," we manifest a disposition to conform, as far as it will possibly do, to the maxims, fashions, temper, and amusements of the world, those who have made no such pledge, will be encouraged to go further. If we make what are called good bargains, they will think themselves perfectly justified in making better. If we walk out on the Sabbath, they will ride out. If we go a mile, they will be likely to go five, or ten. If we sail in the packet, or steam-boat, half an hour before sunset, they will sail at noon or in the morning. If we absent ourselves from the house of God a part of the day, they will stay at home all day. If we take now and then a social glass at the tavern, many a tippler will think the example almost sufficient to justify him in habitual intoxication. Or if, in any indulgence, we advance quite up to the line, and manifest a disposition to go as far as our profession will possibly allow, what can we expect but that others will go still further, and involve themselves in deep guilt and condemnation?

It would be perfectly idle for us in such cases to say, that our neighbors have no right to follow our example when we do wrong, and much less, to fall below our standard. What if they have no right to sin, because we do, and even more than we do? This is nothing to the purpose. The young, especially, will be influenced by our example, whether we intend they shall be or not; and it is only by abstaining from all appearance of evil, or, in other words, by constant watchfulness, and keeping away from the extreme limits of lawful indulgence, that we can reasonably hope to save them from transgression. But few members of our churches, I fear, are aware how much they may have to answer for in this very thing. To say nothing here, of that class of professors who lead the way even upon the enemy's ground, how many others, also, show but too plainly what is in their hearts, by going as far as they dare? It will never be known till the day of judgment, how many souls are ruined by such examples; nor how many are saved by a contrary influence.

5. Another cogent reason for the injunction in my text, is this,—The *limits between right and wrong actions, between lawful and unlawful*

indulgences, are often extremely indefinite. It is manifest, I think, that God never intended so precisely to mark every deviation from his law, that we may fearlessly advance up to the extreme limit of safety, without any risk of transgression. I am persuaded, he never meant to say to us, "all is lawful, till you reach that hair line, and all beyond it is sinful." There is often a doubtful space of very considerable extent, between what we may certainly know to be right, and certainly know to be wrong; and we tread upon this doubtful ground at our peril. The very fact of its being doubtful, warns us to keep off; and this is the only safe course. It is the course which every consistent Christian will take. And how much better it is, never to venture within the limits of uncertainty, even though we should not actually transgress in a given case, than to run the hazard of it by our temerity.

That there is such a doubtful region as I have just alluded to, might be illustrated by a great variety of examples. A few of them I will mention.

God has given us an appetite for food, and has made it not only lawful, but a duty, to indulge this appetite, for the preservation of life and health. But all will say, that there ought to be some limits to the indulgence, while no one can tell us exactly where they are. Wide as the difference is between temperance and gluttony, who will undertake to point out precisely where the former ceases, and the latter begins?

So it is undoubtedly right, sometimes, to relax from severe study, or intense application to business. Nay, it is a duty so to do: for no man can live without some relaxation. But when to unbend, and how long, are questions which it is often extremely difficult to answer.

The same remark will apply to amusements. From the list of amusements I should certainly strike off many which are highly fashionable, and which the world esteems perfectly innocent. But something of the kind, especially for young people, seems to be necessary. There are, or may be, *lawful* amusements; but even these may become sinful, by excessive indulgence. Now the great difficulty is to fix the proper limits—to know just how far the indulgence may be carried. This, I venture to say, is sometimes impossible. You may be certain, on one hand, that the indulgence, in a moderate degree, is beneficial; and, on the other, that when carried to extremes, it is injurious and sinful. But where, *precisely*, does it cease to be right, and of course become unlawful? Tell us, who can?

Again: what is true Christian *gravity*? Is it destroyed by a single smile? Is it by two? by three? Nobody will pretend that it is. And yet there are limits beyond which even the habit of smiling cannot consistently be indulged, especially by older Christians. It is easy to decide that one professor is grave, and another is criminally light in his deportment; but who will undertake to tell us where gravity first begins to relax into levity, so that we may stop at the exact point of safety?

So in apparel, the quality of food, of household furniture, and the like, something beyond our bare necessities is most certainly lawful. But

how much? How far may we be influenced in such cases by our pecuniary circumstances; by our various employments and professions in life; by a regard to our personal, or official standing in the community; or by the opinions and customs of the age and place in which we live? That some regard is due to circumstances like these—that a rich man may expend more upon himself and family than a very poor man—that the merchant may wear better cloth in his counting-room, than the common laborer does in his field—that a secretary of state should live in a different style from a retired farmer, or mechanic; and that a man is justified in paying some regard to public sentiment, will be admitted by every candid and enlightened mind. But still the question will return, how much more have I a right to expend than would be necessary barely to make me comfortable? A thousand such questions might be asked, which no man can answer. One thing, however, is clear. It is far better to err on the side of self-denial, plainness, and economy, than on that of show and extravagance—far better to stop much short of the extreme point of what is lawful, than ever to go a step beyond it. Our safety lies in standing off wide from the rocks and quicksands, or, in plainer language, in *abstaining from all appearance of evil*.

And the very doubtfulness which rests upon so many practical questions of every day occurrence, is an admirable arrangement in the divine economy. It is evidently designed to try men's hearts and to keep their consciences always awake. Could we know precisely, and in all cases, where the line is, there would be little need of caution. It is the danger of treading upon forbidden ground, ere we are aware of it, that makes circumspection so necessary; and who can estimate the value of this habit in forming a truly virtuous character?

6. There is no safeguard against the power of temptation, but in abstaining from all appearance of evil. The firmest resolution cannot be trusted. The most settled convictions of duty are liable to be subverted. No man is safe who relies upon the strength of his religious principles, and in this vain confidence goes as far as he can, without actually violating God's holy law. The professed disciple of Christ, who thinks he is so perfectly self-balanced, that he can walk all day upon the line between the kingdoms of light and darkness, will inevitably slide and fall. The soldier of the cross who wantonly puts himself in jeopardy, will bitterly rue his temerity in the end. Thus to assay the temper of his armour, is in effect, to lay it aside altogether, and to expose himself without any defence to every feathered missile from the enemy's lines. Whoever stops to parley with temptation, is already more than half overcome. The man who would be secure from danger, must keep so far away, that he cannot hear the song of the syrens; and should he ever find that he is approaching any of their enchanted retreats, he must fly and deliver himself, "as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler."

And now, dear brethren, in view of this subject, "what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Let me speak, not so much to your outward ear, as to your consciences, and ask a few plain questions. Do you stand acquitted, or condemned, by what has now been advanced? Have you an inward testimony that since you professed allegiance to Christ, you have been striving to keep all his commandments? Can you say in the presence of God, that you never ventured upon an action, when you had doubts as to its lawfulness? Or is there a counter testimony in your bosom? How do you regard and treat your weaker brethren? Do you put a higher estimate upon their safety, and their confidence in you, as a Christian, than upon those indulgences, which, though lawful, cannot be essential to your happiness, and much less to your spiritual improvement? Can you say with Paul, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth?" "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?"

Do you consider how many eyes the world fixes steadily upon you—how narrowly your every step is watched—how quickly every appearance of evil is observed—and what a mighty influence your example may exert, to brighten or darken the eternity of your relatives, friends, and acquaintances, who are yet in their sins? Are you conscious of your own weakness? Is it your daily and fervent prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil?" Do you cry unto God with David, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins?" And would you rather suffer in your own feelings, or outward estate, than become the occasion of grief or stumbling in the church? If not, how can you cherish the Christian hope? If your religion does not harmonize with the spirit of the foregoing inquiries, it is vain. It contains nothing saving, nothing truly benevolent. It may possibly give you a name to live for a little while, but it will end in disappointment and wo. At best, it is the form of godliness, without the power. For there is no pulsation at the heart. There is no life-blood to animate the extremities. There is no inspiring soul to light up a heavenly radiance in the countenance.

Dear brethren, you will have not merely *occasional*, but *daily* use for the rule in my text. Let me exhort you to carry it along with you, wherever you go. Be for ever on your guard. Always take time to ask before you speak,—Will there be any appearance of evil, of censoriousness, of envy, of duplicity, of unchristian levity, in what I am about to say? Always inquire before you act,—not what will the world say, if I dare be singular; but, Is what I am about to do consistent with my Christian profession? Would Paul do it? Will the Lord Jesus Christ approve of it? Will it wound and afflict even the weakest of his friends? Will it give occasion to speak reproachfully of religion and the church?

When duty calls you into the world—when professional business, or

trade, or the common and necessary intercourse of society, brings you into contact with men who make no pretensions to vital piety, be on your guard. Let every thing be *manifestly* fair and honest. It is not enough, that you be strictly just in your dealings with mankind : to avoid the appearance of evil, you must often do more than your contract, or than any rule of equity requires ; and in making these personal sacrifices, you must do "more than others." If you have much intercourse with the world, in the various exchanges of equivalent value, you will not unfrequently find yourselves placed in such circumstances, that you must either relinquish some right, or incur the suspicion of dishonesty ; or rather, perhaps I ought to say, of not being scrupulously honest in that particular transaction. And surely, whenever the sacrifice is not so great, as to bring up a serious question of duty on the other side, you cannot hesitate to make it, on the ground just mentioned.

Beware, too, how you give countenance to vain and sinful amusements, either by your presence or connivance. I will not say, that your voice must never be heard in the loud laugh or vulgar song of the bar-room, for in these things there is much more than the appearance of evil ; nor that you must never enter your names in any of the great fashionable schools of vice or frivolity. But if you are parents, I will ask how you can permit your children to go, without giving up that authority with which God has intrusted you, for their safety and happiness ; or without incurring the charge of gross inconsistency ? Let those, especially, answer, whose sons and daughters return unrebuked from the ball-room, when the morning star is putting out its light, or who are among the first to encourage some transient, if not unprincipled and immoral master of positions and mazes, to take into his special keeping, the youthful manners and morals of the village.

Let me, then, earnestly exhort you to abstain from all appearance of evil. For in no other way can you be safe from the power of temptation. In no other way can you keep yourselves unspotted from the world. In no other way can you show your ardent love to all the brethren. In no other way can you uniformly honor the Savior. In no other way can you "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of *good report* ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things : " that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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VOL. IV.

SERMON LXXI.

BY WILLIAM C. WALTON, A.M.
ALEXANDRIA, D. C.

ENCOURAGEMENT ONLY TO THE DEVOTED AND OBEDIENT:

ISAIAH, l. 10.—*Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.*

THE *fear of the Lord*, is a phrase often used in the Bible to express true religion. Accordingly the Divine blessing is pronounced upon *every one who fears the Lord*. It is therefore to be distinguished from that *fear which hath torment*. It is a *filiul* fear; such as a good child has towards a good father, whom he loves, whose favor he highly prizes, and whose displeasure he dreads to incur.

It is here supposed, that the person who thus fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant, may, in some sense, walk in darkness and have no light. My object is to explain this figurative language, and to show how it was intended to be applied.

Light is emblematic of joy; e. g. "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart." It is also an emblem of knowledge;—"Whatsoever doth make manifest, is light." Knowledge is to the soul, what light is to the eye. When I have light, I see where to walk; so when I have knowledge in regard to my duty, I see what course I ought to pursue. Or if I have knowledge in regard to the manner in which Providence will deliver me from evils under which I suffer, I have light—I do not walk in darkness, with respect to such deliverance. If, on the contrary, I cannot see, nor even conjecture, *how* I am to be delivered from existing or impending evils, I may be said to walk in darkness: and in that case, if I *fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant*, I am encouraged to *trust in his name*, and to *stay myself upon Him*. But suppose I doubt whether I am a Christian, and as such entitled to the inheritance of the saints: if I have no scriptural evidence that I possess this character, I may be said to walk in darkness in this respect. Now, the question is, to which of these cases was the language of the text intended to apply? I believe the last case stated is the one to which it is *generally* applied: a state of the soul in which there exists no satisfactory evidence of the Divine favor; or, as it is often expressed—in which the *light of God's countenance is withdrawn*. It is characterized by *hardness of heart*.

the absence of all comfortable views and feelings, a consciousness of being unfit for religious duty, and a reluctance to engage in such duty. Such, or something like it, is the condition of those to whom the text is *commonly* applied; and if this application *be correct*, the meaning will be, that a professor of religion who has no satisfactory evidence of the Divine favor; whose heart is hard; who has no comfortable views or feelings; who is conscious of being unfit for religious duty; and who takes no pleasure or interest in the performance of such duty;—that such a one has no reason to fear, but may rest assured that his condition is safe—may trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God, confident that all will end well! Is this the doctrine of the text? Who can believe it? The difficulty is increased when we consider that the character here spoken of, not only “*fears the Lord*”—i. e. has the very temper of a child of God—but “*obeys his voice.*” Can this be said of those to whom the text is *generally* applied? According to the above statement, and their own confession, they are living in the known neglect of duty; and do not enjoy the light of God’s countenance. Indeed, it is on this very account that they consider the text as applicable to themselves. But what is the import of this confession? It will be understood, by considering for a moment the meaning of the phrase, *the light of God’s countenance*. What can that mean, but an *expression* of the Divine approbation? When a father is pleased with the conduct of his son, approbation is expressed in his countenance. If the son behave amiss, he soon observes a change in the expression of his father’s countenance towards him; and is generally conscious that he has done *wrong*. If at any time he should observe such a change, without at once knowing the cause, he will immediately suspect himself; and will ask, What have I done to offend my father? So, when the children of God walk in his fear, and in obedience to his commands; when their supreme object is to please and to glorify him in all they do; while they trust in his abounding mercy through Christ, they enjoy the light of his countenance; i. e. the expression of his favor and approbation. This is manifested by his word and by his Spirit.

1. His word assures them, that such persons are the objects of his special favor. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He *delighteth* in his way.” Again, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.”

2. His Spirit produces in them that state of feeling which is called “*the spirit of adoption.*” The Apostle says, “We have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father!” In this expression is included the testimony of an enlightened conscience. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.” Before Enoch was translated, “he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

If such be the meaning of the phrase in question, it would involve a palpable contradiction to apply the text to those from whom, according to their own acknowledgment, the light of God’s countenance is withheld, and who *are consequently* walking in darkness, as to any evidence of the Divine favor. *Application* of the text to them, would imply that they have the *full*

spirit of the children of God, and that they are walking in unreserved obedience to his commands, when the reverse is the fact, except in some extraordinary cases, like that of the poet Cowper. It would further imply, that God would have them to understand from this text, that they are the objects of his special favor, that He has no controversy with them for disobedience, or neglect of duty, and that they have no cause to doubt or fear; when, according to the true meaning of the phrase just explained, He is frowning upon them, expressing his displeasure, and telling them by the darkness which rests upon their minds, that **SOMETHING IS WRONG**, and that they ought to examine their heart and conduct, and to compare both with His word, in order to ascertain where the fault lies. This view of the subject is further corroborated by the following passages of scripture: "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you." God said to Moses respecting Israel, "They will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them; *then* my anger shall be kindled against them, and I will *hide my face* from them." The prophet Isaiah says, "Thou hast *hid thy face* from us, *because of our iniquities.*" The same truth is expressed almost in the same words by the prophet Ezekiel; "Because they trespassed against me, *therefore* I hid my face from them." These passages, and others which relate to this subject, cannot, it appears to me, be reconciled with the supposition, that the text was intended for the relief and encouragement of those from whom the light of God's countenance is withdrawn, and who are walking in darkness as to religious enjoyment and as to any evidence of the Divine favor and acceptance. We cannot, in the face of these and many similar declarations, admit, that God intended by the text, to convey a meaning like this;—although you fear my name and are obedient to my voice; and although, in my word, I have given you the assurance of my favor, and have pronounced you blessed, yet I am now withholding the light of my countenance from you, thereby *expressing* the reverse of what I *feel* towards you, in order to try your faith! therefore trust in my name and stay yourselves upon me, for the darkness will soon pass away, and all will end well! It would be doing infinite injustice to God to impute such language or such a *meaning* to Him. No; when He *frowns*, it is an unequivocal declaration of His displeasure: it is the signal of alarm; a call to repent, and to *do works meet* for repentance. To persons in this condition there are other texts more applicable.—"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that He will not hear." See also, lviii. chapter of Isaiah—and the prophecy of Haggai.

Whatever, therefore, may be meant in the text by *walking in darkness and having no light*, it cannot mean, that the persons referred to are experiencing the tokens of God's displeasure; nor does it imply the absence of those gracious affections which belong to the children of God; or that they are living in the avowed neglect of duty. We must therefore find another meaning.

In the preceding chapters, the prophet speaks of the Babylonian captivity, and of the oppressions of the Israelites during that dark period of *sin*

history. He also predicts their deliverance and restoration to their own land, and the subversion of the Chaldean empire. Such, however, was the strength, and such the resources of that vast empire; and to such a state of imbecility and wretchedness had the Israelites been reduced at the time of the prediction, that its fulfilment appeared to be impossible, or in the highest degree improbable. There was nothing in the aspect of things which could enable them to see or even to conjecture, how it should come to pass. Therefore, knowing how dark and discouraging the prospects of his people would be in this state of captivity, God reminds them of what He had done for their ancestors in ages past; how He had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and evinced his favor towards them by the most extraordinary interpositions: He tells them they are still his covenant people, and that He will not forsake them; He gives them this assurance in the tenderest and most forcible manner;—"Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." No! says He, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee." And lest in their despondency they should doubt his ability to accomplish their deliverance, He refers them to the works of creation and providence as illustrative of his power. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance! Behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing! All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him, less than nothing and vanity! To whom, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold! who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" This expostulation and much more to the same purpose, is intended to dispel the fears and to revive the hopes of his desponding people, who had hung their harps upon the willows, and who wept by the rivers of Babylon, when they remembered Zion. The text appears to form a part of the same general address: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." There was a pious remnant of the nation answering to this description. They feared the Lord and obeyed his voice under the darkest and most discouraging circumstances. God had said, I will sift them as wheat is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not one grain be lost. And why would He take so much care of them? Because they were *precious* in his sight. He tells them so; and assures them that He *loved* them with more than a mother's tenderness for her infant child; and moreover that it was his fixed purpose soon to *appear for their deliverance*; that his Almighty arm, which had divided the *1, and broken the power of Egypt, and led his people out from the house of*

bondage, would *awake*, and put on strength as in the ancient days, in the generations of old ; and that they, the redeemed of the Lord, should return and come with singing unto Zion ; and He would have them take the comfort of it before hand. " I, even I, am He that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the Son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ?" He tells them, in effect, that although they had no light as to the manner in which He would accomplish their deliverance and restoration, yet they might confidently trust his power and faithfulness ; for *it should be done*.

Such is the obvious meaning of the text. I would now improve the subject by stating a few similar cases, to which it might properly be applied.

1. It might be applied to a case like that of Joseph, while lying under the reproach of a crime which he never committed, and which he abhorred. This was a great trial to his pure mind. From a situation of high respect and unbounded confidence, he was suddenly reduced to that of the basest criminal ; stripped of all his honors ; covered with infamy ; immured in a prison ; and without any earthly prospect of relief, because the circumstances of the case were such as to render it impossible for him to prove his innocence. But as he feared the Lord and obeyed his voice, he was authorized to trust in Him and to stay himself upon the divine faithfulness. The happy result is known to such as are familiar with the Bible. His righteousness was brought forth as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day.

2. The situation of David during the life-time of Saul, was such as would have justified the application of the text. God had promised that he should be king over his people ; and yet he was obliged to fly for his life, and to wander among the mountains, and to hide himself in dens and caves of the earth. Thus he was walking in darkness as to any prospect of relief, except from a Divine interposition. But walking in darkness in this sense, was perfectly consistent with the most vigorous exercise of gracious affections, and with the fullest assurance of Divine favor ; and judging by his psalms composed during this period, we can have no doubt of the spirituality of his mind and of his confidence in God. While he feared the Lord and obeyed his voice, he was authorized to trust in him for the full accomplishment of his promises ; and doing so, he had comfort and protection, and was finally delivered from all his enemies, and raised to the throne of Israel. From this result we see, that it was not necessary for him to use any unlawful means, either for self-preservation, or for the attainment of the object which had been promised to him. It was only necessary, that he should *trust in the Lord and obey his voice*. And this is the Christian's duty and privilege in circumstances of the greatest trial. Our way may be as dark as that of the Israelites in Babylon ; or as that of Joseph when in prison ; or as that of David, when " hunted like a partridge upon the mountains." We may be oppressed, and slandered, and persecuted ; and subjected to the strongest temptations to neglect our duty, or to resort to some sinful compliance, or to some unlawful expedient to obtain relief : nevertheless, if we hold fast our integrity and persevere through every discouragement, in the faithful performance of duty, confidently believing that God will appear for *our deliverance, or make up to us either in time or in eternity, all that we*

may sacrifice for a good conscience and in obedience to his will, *staying ourselves upon this belief*, as a man in the midst of a storm at sea would cling to a rock as his only protection from the violence of the winds and waves, we shall realize a result happier than that which was experienced by the Israelites, when they returned with singing unto Zion; happier than that in the history of Joseph, when his prison was exchanged for a palace; happier than that which rewarded the fidelity and obedience of David, when the Lord gave him the throne of Israel. For to us, in such circumstances, is this cheering language addressed:—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant? that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God."—Let him rest assured, that not one of these trials has been sent without a wise and merciful design, and that all shall work together for his good—for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

3. The last case which I shall state as justifying the application of the text, is that of the Church at the present day, when looking at the moral condition of the world in connexion with the prophecies. The conversion of the world is predicted in the Bible with as much certainty as was the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity; and the obstacles which oppose the accomplishment of this prediction are far greater than those which darkened the prospects of the captive Jews. It is true, the church has a thousand engines at work for pulling down the strong holds of sin: her Bibles and her Tracts are multiplying by millions per annum; her infant and sabbath schools and Bible classes are anticipating the movements of the enemy, and taking a vantage-ground, from which he can be more successfully attacked hereafter; her periodicals are diffusing information; her ministers are becoming more numerous, enlightened, and faithful; and her private members, more active and enterprising: and while all these are laboring at home, her missionaries are reconnoitring the enemy abroad, and often attacking him in the front of battle: or to change the metaphor, they are laboring to bring down the mountains and to raise the valleys, and thus to prepare the way of the Lord and a highway for our God. But while all this is doing, what is it in comparison with the work to be done? The disparity between Jonathan and his armor-bearer and the army of the Philistines, was not so great, as that which exists between the army of Christ now in the field and the hundreds of millions which fill the ranks of the enemy. In the view of all who disbelieve the promises of God, then, the attempts of a company of children to level the Alleghany or the Andes, with such little instruments as they are able to wield, would not appear more hopeless, than those which the Christian church is now making to convert the world. Therefore, the church may be said to be walking in darkness with respect to this event. She does not see how the immense obstacles are to be removed. She knows that the means she employs are in themselves perfectly inadequate to accomplish the work, and that it cannot be accomplished without a Divine interposition greater than any ever yet witnessed. She is, therefore, as entirely thrown upon faith, in relation to this matter, as the Jews were with regard to their restoration. *It was written*, that after seventy years, when the Lord had accomplished his purposes in their affliction, they should be released from their captivity and

restored to their own land; and they were encouraged in the mean time to trust in the Lord and to stay themselves upon his promises, confidently believing that He could and would remove every obstacle. So it is written, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" that the time will come when it shall be proclaimed in heaven, that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" when "all kings shall bow down before Him and all nations shall serve Him;" and when "in every place incense shall be offered to His name and a pure offering." All this and much more is recorded in the sure word of prophecy; and although we may walk in darkness and have no light as to the manner in which these and many other predictions will be fulfilled; yet, while we fear the Lord and obey his voice, we may trust, and stay ourselves upon Him, in the assurance that he will as certainly verify these predictions, as He did those which related to the restoration of Israel from the captivity of Babylon. "For ever, O Lord! thy word is settled in heaven." Christians, therefore, may labor for the conversion of the world, with the utmost certainty of success. Let the desponding, then, take down their harps from the willows; let the timid take courage; let the penurious open their hands; let the slothful and inactive gird themselves for the work; let the divided armies of Zion's King take heed to their movements, that none of their energies be wasted in contending with one another; let them see to it, that the whole amount of influence which the universal church can command, be brought to bear against the kingdom of darkness; and verily that kingdom will fall, like lightning from heaven; and while it falls, the kingdom of the Redeemer will rise in beauty and grandeur upon its ruins.

The only additional remark which I shall make, by way of improvement, is, that it is a principle which runs through the whole economy of grace, to connect comfort with the active and faithful performance of duty.

This principle, it is believed, has not been generally recognised. Hence the perversion of the text; and hence the low state of religious enjoyment in the church. If the practical error which prevails on this subject could be rectified, the effect would soon be seen in the improved aspect of all the churches, and it would soon be felt to the ends of the earth. One reason why Christians have done so little to extend the knowledge and influence of the Gospel through the world, is, that they have not inquired as they ought to have done, into their responsibilities in relation to this matter. Thus they have neglected their duty. The consequence has been, the absence of that religious enjoyment which might have resulted from activity in doing good, and from that evidence of their Christian character which might have been furnished by the very work to which they were called. They appear not to understand the *reason* why they are left to walk in darkness. Instead of ascribing it to their neglect of duty—or in other words, to their *sins*,—they resolve it into "human imperfection;" "moral necessity;" "divine sovereignty;" an expedient to "try their faith;" or to "make them humble;"—any thing, in short, but the true cause. They say "it is the common experience of Christians to walk in darkness sometimes, and we cannot expect to be always upon the mount;" and thus they satisfy *themselves*, without the present exercise of right feelings towards God, or

towards their fellow-men, and without a disposition to do their duty; while the neglect of this duty not only brings darkness over their own prospects but perpetuates the desolations of Zion, and involves the certain destruction of millions, who are dying without that Gospel which Christians are bound to send through the world. No wonder that such persons find it difficult to discover in their experience and in their conduct the evidence that they are the disciples of Christ, and on the way to heaven: and yet they often do wonder, why they cannot experience light and comfort as well as others. The reason is obvious. They are serving, not God, but themselves; they are devoted to this world; its objects and pursuits engross their thoughts; while they are doing little or nothing for that Savior, who labored and died for sinners. It would be unreasonable, nay, presumptuous, for such persons to expect or to hope that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon them. How could He thus express his approbation of the state of their hearts, and of the course they are pursuing; when both are in direct opposition to His requirements? No! He must continue to frown upon them, and they must continue to walk in darkness, until they learn to *fear the Lord* and *obey his voice*. Then, and not till then, will *their light rise out of obscurity, and their darkness become as the noon-day*.

SERMON LXXII.

BY WILLIAM C. WALTON, A.M.

NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR THE MILLENNIUM.

ISAIAH lxii. 6, 7.—*Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

A RIGHT understanding of the purposes of God in relation to his Church, is highly important. It will not only heighten our religious enjoyment, but furnish a powerful stimulus to exertion. Without such understanding, we have no certain ground of hope that the cause of Christ will finally triumph: and hope is in all cases essential to vigorous action. Let all Christians know and feel that it is God's purpose to establish and to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth; that his omnipotence is pledged for the accomplishment of this purpose; and let them be fully convinced that He designs to accomplish it through the instrumentality of his people; and the effect must be a great increase of their zeal and activity. The victory will be more than half won. The church will immediately assume that character and attitude which will ensure her speedy triumph. In the discussion of this subject, then, I shall first attempt to show,

1. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ESTABLISHING JERUSALEM, AND MAKING HER A PRAISE IN THE EARTH.

Jerusalem, is a figurative name of the church. It is therefore the church

that is to be established and made a praise in the earth. This church is, also, frequently called a kingdom ; being composed of those, who professedly submit to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us then consider the church as the kingdom of Christ, and apply the language of the text accordingly. If his kingdom were of this world, it is plain, that it could not be universally established, but upon the ruins of all human governments. But Christ has declared, that his kingdom is not of this character ; and therefore, its establishment will not require the subversion of other kingdoms. On the contrary, it will add strength and stability to every government whose principles are consistent with the liberty and happiness of man. But inasmuch as the conversion of kings and other rulers is predicted to take place at that period to which the text refers, we may be sure that they will then abstain from the injustice, violence, and tyranny, which have so often made them the scourges of human nature ; and will lend their personal influence to promote holiness and happiness. Even then, however, we presume, the departments of church and state will be kept entirely distinct. Let statesmen and politicians, therefore, understand, that when Christians pray and labor for the *establishment* of the church, it is in a sense far different from that which excites their jealousies ; it is not with a view to acquire political power, or with hostile designs against any particular form of human government. No—the object at which they aim, is a change in the moral character and conduct of men ; to be produced through the power of truth and love. They aim at the victory of truth over error ; of virtue and religion over vice and profligacy ; of the principles of order, harmony, and love, over those of discord, dissension, and every thing inimical to human happiness. In a word, our hostility is against the kingdom of Satan. It is *this* which stands in the way of Christ's kingdom. Both, cannot exist together ; they are perfect opposites ; as different in their nature, as light and darkness, fire and water. Hence we are told, “ for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” This is indispensable to the establishment of His kingdom. He first *dipped his own garments in blood*, and laid down his life in the enterprise : and having thus “ spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly,” he ascended to Heaven, there to make intercession ; and now from his throne of love he invokes his disciples to co-operate with him : “ Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

If you survey the map of the moral world, you must see, that the kingdom of Christ, among men, now bears but a small proportion to the kingdom of Satan. In this state of things, the kingdom of Christ cannot, with any propriety, be said to be *established*. On the contrary, its standing is extremely precarious in the opinion of those who cannot see the *walls and bulwarks* by which it is defended. To such it must appear, that this kingdom might be annihilated with as much ease as one of the smallest states in Europe might be crushed, by a combination of all the other powers against it ; or as a single vessel could be destroyed, if surrounded by an immense fleet.

The *establishment* of Christ's kingdom implies its pervading influence among all ranks of men, in all lands : it implies the destruction of idolatry and of infidelity ; the extermination of heresy ; the conversion of the heathen,

of the Mahomedans, of the Jews, and of the multitudes of merely nominal Christians ; in a word, it implies the universal knowledge and reception of the truth, and a universal submission to the authority of Christ.

When all this takes place ; when the millions of Europe and of Asia shall renounce their idolatry and their various forms of false religion, and embrace the holy precepts of the gospel ; when Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God ; when the isles shall all receive his law ; when every family in our vast continent shall be blest with the Bible, and with a disposition to make the right use of it ; and when the whole church thus enlarged shall cease vain wrangling, and love as brethren ; then may Jerusalem be said to be *established* ; and then, too, will she be a *praise in all the earth*. There will be nothing like her for beauty, and grandeur, and glory under the whole heavens.

2. I NOW PROCEED TO SHOW, THAT IT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD TO ACCOMPLISH ALL THIS FOR HIS CHURCH.

He has said that Christ must reign until He has put all enemies under his feet ; that He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall bow down before Him and all nations shall serve Him. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering. The same is predicted by the prophet Daniel. After speaking of the rise and fall of other kingdoms in succession, until he came to the Roman Empire, he says, In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall stand for ever. The commencement of this kingdom he thus describes : I saw—and behold one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. After predicting in these general terms the kingdom of the Messiah, he goes on to speak of other kingdoms which would arise, and especially of one distinguished from the rest by striking peculiarities, and which would continue for a limited time, at the end of which it would be utterly destroyed. Then, i. e. subsequent to the destruction of this kingdom, a glorious scene opens before the eye of the prophet, which corresponds with all we have stated as being implied in the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ. This vision therefore claims particular attention, as being immediately connected with our subject. The four great Empires which stand most conspicuously on the page of ancient history, were exhibited to the prophet under the emblem of four great beasts,—the first of which was devoured by the second, the second by the third, and the third by the fourth. Being solicitous to know something further respecting the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the rest, his heavenly interpreter proceeded to give him the desired information. The fourth beast, said he, shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise ; and another shall arise after them ; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue

three kings. This fourth kingdom was unquestionably the Roman Empire, for the prophet was expressly informed that the first was the Babylonian, the second the Medo-Persian, the third the Grecian; and we know the Roman Empire followed next, and devoured the whole earth, and trod it down and broke it in pieces; i. e. it subdued all other kingdoms, so that Rome was proudly called "the mistress of the world." So far, there can be no mistake. It is equally certain that as the Roman Empire declined and fell, ten kingdoms arose out of it. Another fact which authentic history records, is, that when the Roman Pontiff assumed temporal power, his dominions embraced three of these kingdoms. The conclusion from this fact is obvious, and cannot be evaded. It is, that all which the prophet says respecting this singular power, that should subdue three kings and possess their dominions, is to be applied to the pope of Rome; or to that kingdom of which he is the head. And what does the prophet say of him?—He shall speak great words against the Most High. This is explained by the apostle Paul, when speaking of the same personage; whom he calls the man of sin and son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. The lofty and blasphemous pretensions of the Pope fully correspond with this prediction; and no other character recorded in history will correspond with it.—Moreover, "he shall make war with the saints of the Most High, and wear them out." The unremitted persecution of all within the reach of his power, who dared to think and act for themselves in matters of religion; a persecution extending through centuries, in which more than fifty millions of human beings, have been sacrificed; this is the appalling fact, which corresponds to the above prediction. Thus have the saints of the Most High been *worn out*;—and the terrible process is going on still, though less extensively, and with less publicity; for the Inquisition is to this day in full operation in Spain; and a similar power is employed for similar purposes, in other places, though without the name. But let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice, that this kingdom is now waning, and is soon to end. The prophet was informed that it would exist only for a time, times, and the dividing of time; i. e. for three and a half prophetic years, which, as this expression is explained in the Apocalypse, amount to 1260 years. Learned men have fixed upon several different periods, for the commencement of this power, or of the reign of antichrist, as it is also called. My object, however, does not require any minute calculations. Take any one of the periods fixed upon, and add to it 1260 years, and you will get a result which would not reach far beyond the period of time to which we have now arrived. And when that time shall come, the glorious change will take place for which we are required in the text to pray: for Daniel says, I beheld, and the same horn, or power, made war with the saints and prevailed against them; *until* the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Again—he says, the saints shall be given into his hands, *until* a time, and times, and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall set, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end. *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the*

whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

The apostle Paul says, the Lord shall consume this wicked one with the breath of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming. And the apostle John represents the destruction of the same power, as being sudden and terrible, beyond all human description: (Rev. xviii.) But before this awful catastrophe, a voice is heard from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. These tremendous judgments, inflicted upon the power which has so long corrupted the church of God, and wasted the saints, will make way for the universal diffusion of the Gospel. This is predicted in the two next chapters; (xix and xx.) And while great Babylon comes in remembrance before God, to receive the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath, the false prophet is not forgotten. Both are to be cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone. That is, the Mahomedan power in the East, will be destroyed as well as the papal power in the West; and the two events, it would seem, are to be cotemporaneous; or the one speedily to follow the other. Moreover,—according to Zechariah xiv. 4, the destruction of the Mahomedan power, represented by the cleaving asunder of a mountain, will be immediately followed by the return of the Jews to Palestine, (v. 5), and their conversion to Christianity; (v. 9, compared with Ezek. xxxvi. 24—28). And when the Jews shall be brought in, we know the fulness of the Gentiles will be gathered also. And there appears to be a high degree of probability, that the Jews, when converted, will be made instruments of blessing the world. Their history alone, in connexion with the prophecies respecting them, will be equivalent to a thousand miracles in proof of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Infidelity will thus be silenced. And, besides, having been so widely dispersed, and having a knowledge of the languages and customs of all nations, among whom they have been scattered, the Jews will be eminently qualified to become missionaries at once: and thus, perhaps, will that prophecy in Zech. xiv. 8, be remarkably fulfilled: And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem. May not these living waters mean the blessings of the gospel, which will be carried to all nations by the Jews after their conversion? Whether this opinion be correct or not, the next verse describes a state of things which we might reasonably suppose would be the result of such a movement:—And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem:—and the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord and his Name one. This can mean nothing less than the universal prevalence of one religion; or the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ. He is to be KING over all the earth; for all kings shall bow down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. If this is not predicted, then nothing can be certainly gathered from the language of prophecy. It is, therefore, the *purpose* of God to *establish Jerusalem* and to *make her a praise in the earth*.

3. IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS WORK, GOD WILL EMPLOY HUMAN AGENCY.

The command to evangelize the nations was given, not to *angels*, but to *men*. Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature.—Go ye, and teach all nations. Again, the Savior says to his disciples, Ye are the light of the world.—Ye are the salt of the earth: i. e. you are to be the instruments of enlightening, and purifying, and saving the world. But, in order to answer this description, and to execute this high commission, Christians must be a *peculiar people*; they must have a distinct character; a character as distinct from that of the world, as light is from darkness. If a lighted candle did not produce an effect essentially different from darkness, it would not answer the purpose for which it is intended. Darkness would never enlighten itself. Before a wise man makes use of an instrument, he will see that it is fitted for the purpose which he intends to accomplish by it. And God has revealed it as his purpose, to fit his church for the great work which He intends to accomplish by her instrumentality. Accordingly we find in the prophecy of Daniel, that after the sanctuary or the church has been polluted and trodden under foot, i. e. in a state of comparative corruption and depression, for 2300 prophetic days, it is to be purified: Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed; (Dan. viii. 13, 14.) And this must be antecedent to the time referred to in the prophecy already considered, when the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever and ever. **THE CHURCH THEN IS TO BE PURIFIED, BEFORE SHE WILL BE THUS EXALTED.** This conclusion from the prophecy of Daniel, accords with the still clearer prediction of Isaiah. The sixtieth chapter of his prophecy contains the most striking representation of that state of the church to which the text refers, that is to be found in the Bible. It commences thus: *Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. This is doubtless before the millennium; because the inhabitants of the earth are represented as being covered with gross darkness, excepting the church; which becomes so luminous, as to be an object of admiration and wonder to the nations: an event which was typified by the light shining upon Israel in the land of Goshen, while all the land of Egypt around was covered with darkness. The difference between the church and the world must then be very great, and the **EFFECT** will be correspondent. “The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” But a vast change must take place in the character of the church before the glory of the Lord can be seen upon her, as here predicted. The glory of the natural sun is seen upon an object, when that object reflects the *light* of the sun. It must be the same kind of light which it receives, although its intensity and brilliancy may be in a measure abated. So the church must reflect God’s moral image, in order that his glory may be seen upon her. But how is this to be done? The explanation is easy. The Lord Jesus is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person: or, according to Professor Stuart, *the radiance of his glory, and the exact image of his substance.* He is also spoken of as the Sun of righteousness: Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise. This promise is fulfilled; the Sun

of righteousness is now arising; and every one upon whom his light shines is required to reflect that light, clearly and distinctly; or, in the language of the apostle, we are required to be conformed to the image of the Son of God; to have the same mind, and to follow his steps. Every advance, therefore, which the church makes in holiness, or in conformity to the image of Christ, is an approximation towards that character which she must attain, to be fitted for the great work to which she is called; or, in other words, it is an approximation towards that state of things, which must *precede and prepare the way for the millennium*. Every genuine revival of religion tends to this result; every victory which truth gains over error has the same tendency. This then is the point to which the minds of all Christians ought to be turned; and on which they who make mention of the Lord ought not to keep silence: for if this be not gained, nothing will be gained. The church will not be established, and made a praise in the earth, until fitted for this distinguished honor. The work of converting the world must, according to the revealed purpose of God, be done by her; and yet it will *not* be done, until she be *fitted* for the work. This fitness then, is the first grand object to be attained. Let all Christians and ministers consider this; and let them pray, and preach, and labor, with this object distinctly in view; and never imagine that the distribution of Bibles and tracts, the multiplication of ministers, the extension of the sabbath and infant school systems, or any other means will avail, while the church remains darkened by error, and deformed by sin. On the contrary, let genuine revivals of religion be extended, until the spirit of the Gospel shall pervade the whole church: let truth gain its victories over error, until all professed believers shall be *sanctified through the truth*, and conformed to the image of the divine Savior; and then *the glory of God will be so seen upon the church*, that the happy effects here predicted will follow:—The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together; they come unto thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.—The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.—Surely the isles shall wait for me; and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, for He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and kings shall minister unto thee.—The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the City of the Lord; the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thee; wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. *The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon*

give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God, thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

The language of the text is addressed to Christians. Ye that make mention of the Lord—or ye who are his “remembrancers”—who, to speak after the manner of men, are allowed to *remind* him of his promises ;—Ye are to give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. No intelligent and consistent Christian will say, that because this is the work of God, He does not need our co-operation ; and because the event is here certainly predicted, and will assuredly take place, therefore, we need not urge the matter in prayer, or be very solicitous about it. No ; this is the language of infidelity. But the text, as we have seen, is addressed to Christians ; to praying Christians : and all such will regard the promises of God, as constituting the strongest encouragement to prayer and to exertion. And if time would admit, it might be shown that such a solicitude for the interests of truth and righteousness, as is here enjoined, is absolutely essential to Christian character. Without it, we are not *conformed* to the image of the Son of God ; whose zeal was like a consuming fire to his physical frame. (John ii. 17.) Without it, the church will never exhibit that light and glory of the Lord, which shall give her power over the nations. If I have made this truth sufficiently clear, real Christians will *feel* its animating influence, and will henceforth act accordingly ; while those who have not the spirit of Christ, who have no real concern for his cause on earth, will continue to slumber and disregard the voice of God, and the voice of his Church, and the agonies of a dying world. Such professors of religion have much cause to tremble while they hear others importunately praying that the Lord would establish Jerusalem and make her a praise in the earth ; for how can this prayer be answered, while the church is full of hypocrites, or of lazy, inefficient, worldly-minded members ? Persons of this description, so far from reflecting the glory of the Lord, are dishonoring his name and his religion ; and counteracting what is done for the conversion of the world. So far from shining in the lustre of truth and holiness, they are “spots in your feasts of charity—clouds they are without water ;”—and must I add, “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever ?” While they continue in the visible church in sufficient numbers to influence in any considerable degree the character of the church ; there will be no light for the Gentiles to see ; no brightness to attract the admiration of kings, or of meaner men. Such persons must therefore be converted or put out of the way, before the Lord can answer the prayers of Christians in establishing Jerusalem. Their conduct and influence tend not to *establish*, but to *unsettle* the foundations of the Christian Church, to weaken her energies, and to tie up her hands, when she would attempt any thing for the conversion of the world. If, therefore, the work of God is to go on ; if his purposes are to be accomplished, according to the plan which He has revealed ; all this class of persons, whether officers in the church, or private members, must be converted or put out of the way. But many, we have reason to fear, will not be converted. They are far more stubborn and obstinate in error and in sin, than the heathen themselves. The inevitable consequence,

therefore, must be, their destruction. This event is accordingly predicted. The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. (Isaiah lx. 12.) Nations are composed of individuals. This language, therefore, means that all who will not be subservient to the interests of Zion, who will not be on the Lord's side, and co-operate with him in destroying the works of the devil, and in establishing Jerusalem, shall be utterly wasted and destroyed—whether they be found in or out of the church.

Before the Savior came, God declared that He would shake all nations. He did so ; and then, *the desire of all nations came*. Similar, and perhaps still greater convulsions will prepare the way for the predicted triumphs of the Gospel. Not only the nations, but the churches of Christendom will be shaken. God will do with them as he did with the Jewish church. He will sift them, as wheat is sifted in a sieve. The process will be terrible—but *not one grain shall be lost*. The Lord knoweth them that are his ; and when he has separated them from the wicked, and purified and fitted them for his use, He will honor them according to his word—He will make them an eternal excellency, the joy of the whole earth.

If these things be so, it behooves all ministers and all private Christians to set about this preparatory work. They, who neglect to do so, will not escape because they belong to Christian churches. No ; the time is at hand, when all professing believers must *arise and shine*, and reflect the glory of the Lord, or be involved in one common ruin with his enemies. The accomplishment of the Divine purposes, clearly revealed, absolutely requires one or the other of these alternatives. But, my brethren, why should any of you render it necessary that God should deal with you, as with the refractory nations and kings, who set themselves against the Lord and against his Anointed ? O, why, instead of *turning many to righteousness*, and *shining as the sun in his strength*, should you be *broken with a rod of iron*, or *be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel* ? Such, however, must be the fate of multitudes in Christendom, without a speedy change in their character and conduct. For God must vindicate the honor of his great Name, which has been subjected to reproach and blasphemy by their errors and unholy practices. He must go on to establish Jerusalem, and to make her a praise in the earth, although as He advances, his chariot wheels may crush thousands and ten thousands, who will not get out of the way. But happy, thrice happy shall we be, if, instead of hindering, we now *come to the help of the Lord*, and do his work faithfully, in the true spirit of the text. When the Lord shall establish Jerusalem, and make her a praise in the earth, her triumphs will be our triumphs ; her glory will be our glory ;—while those who act a different part, will sink, condemned of God and of all holy beings ; and at the day of final retribution, will rise only *to shame and everlasting contempt*.

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Co....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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THE WISDOM AND BEAUTY OF YOUTHFUL PIETY.

PROV. VIII. 16, 17.—*I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness.*

THE old remark has much force, "If religion be *any thing*, it is *every thing*,—if it be *at all* important, it is *all-important*." If the truth of the religion of the Gospel be admitted, and its claims be acknowledged, that truth is confessedly invaluable, and these claims are supremely imperative. To delay at any time, and under any circumstances, in making a decided and unreserved surrender to these claims, must ever be an act of folly and madness. Yet there is nothing more common than procrastination in this matter; nothing more common than to silence the testimony of conscience, and still the urgent emotions of the heart, by the presumptuous expectation of future time and opportunity to discharge a work, acknowledged as a present duty. Delay is truly "the thief of time," and the murderer of the soul. The sinner delays, and while he delays, temptation is yielded to, corruption indulged, evil habits strengthened, sinful associations multiplied, the conscience stifled, the heart hardened, the Holy Spirit grieved, and divine wrath provoked. Surely "it is madness to defer." The season of youth is of incalculable importance. It is the morning which enables us to augur the character and condition of more advanced life, and of that eternity which follows. It is the seed-time which leads us to anticipate the harvest. The anxious regards of the wise are ever extended to the young, in reference to the welfare and prospects of the church and of society. The chapter from which the text is taken, commends the excellence and value of *wisdom*, or true religion, and presses its claims upon the children of men. The text declares the complacency which God reposes in true piety, the encouragement given to the young for seeking and cultivating it, and the inestimable blessings which it conveys to its possessors. It is designed to *urge upon the young the pre-eminent importance of piety*, by several considerations:—

I. RELIGION ALONE IS FITTED TO FORM AND PRESERVE PURITY OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT, AND TO FURNISH SOURCES OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

The decision must be made between the religion of the Bible and no religion. It cannot now be a matter of inquiry, whether the claims and evidences of the Christian religion may be compared with the claims and evidences of any other system of religion. Christianity in this age, shines forth in the fulness and clear-

ness of its evidences, and opposition to it will ever be found connected with, and resulting from, a disaffection to that relation and accountableness which we sustain under the government of a holy and just God, and which lies at the very foundation of religion. The weapons which infidelity employs, most commonly and artfully, are ridicule and misrepresentation. While it sports with what is sacred, awful, and lovely, it makes its appeal to the base and selfish passions of our nature. This, adapted to the dispositions and circumstances of its intended victims, may be so varied and concealed as to require watchfulness and discrimination, in order to discover and resist it. The humility, candor, seriousness, docility, and prayer, which are so requisite in the investigation of truth, have manifestly always been wanting in infidels. Pride and passion have controlled reason, and the grand exceptions secretly taken to Christianity, have ever been the humility it requires, and the holiness it enjoins. Who could now advert to any system of theology, or any code of morals existing in pagan nations, past or present, where the light of Christianity has not shined, and not confess the proofs they exhibit of the imbecility of the human intellect, and the depravity of our fallen nature. It was in the Augustan age of Rome, when the orb of science was most dazzling, that idolatry, in its varied forms of the grossest and most revolting absurdity, was the religion of the state and the people; and that the melancholy picture of public and private morals was drawn by Paul, in the 1st chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Infidelity, though ever inconsistent with itself, will at times admit and vindicate some of the elementary principles of religion, and will beautifully descant upon the duties of an exalted and refined morality. For this, however, it is indebted to revelation. Having thus lighted its taper, it would vainly and ungratefully attempt to blot out the great Sun of Righteousness, which "brings life and immortality to light."

The religion of the Gospel unfolds to the sinner his own character and that of God, applies the divine law in its spirituality and strictness, leads to repentance, exhibits the glorious scheme of redemption, inspires faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, renovates the heart, directs and supports in the way of holiness and beneficence, supplies consolations suited to all the exigencies of outward and inward tribulation, ministers that "peace which the world giveth not," and which "passeth understanding," animates with the hope of glory, and conducts to the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Can any substitute be found for such religion? It has been said, conscience will avail to preserve men from vice, and lead them to virtue. But what is conscience? It is that principle which approves when we do right, and condemns when we do wrong. It consequently refers to a standard of right and wrong, applies this standard, and gives its verdict. If the standard be false or partial, the decisions of conscience will of course be erroneous. An unenlightened and defiled conscience may approve the darkest and foulest deeds. Truth must enlighten, and the power of truth must purify and pacify the conscience of men. This is the province of religion. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

It is also said, the principle of honor will avail to preserve men in respectability and usefulness. But what is this principle of honor? It is a reigning regard to those maxims which regulate men especially in the more elevated ranks of life, in their relations and intercourse with each other. It adapts itself to all the changes of maxims and habits which occur in fashionable life. Nothing more clearly manifests the opposition of the spirit of the world to the spirit of truth and holiness, than the operation of this principle of honor. Says Dr. Paley, "The law of honor only prescribes and regulates the duties between equals, omitting such as relate to the Supreme Being, as well as those which we owe to our inferiors,—for which reason profaneness.

neglect of public worship, or private devotion, cruelty to servants, rigorous treatment of tenants or other dependants, want of charity to the poor, injuries done to tradesmen by insolvency or delay of payment, with numberless examples of the same kind, are accounted no breaches of honor; because a man is not less an agreeable companion for these vices, nor the worse to deal with in those concerns which are usually transacted between one gentleman and another. Again, the law of honor being constituted by men occupied in the pursuit of pleasure, and for the mutual convenience of such men, will be found, as might be expected from the character and design of the law-makers, to be in most instances favorable to the licentious indulgence of natural passions. Thus it allows of fornication, adultery, drunkenness, prodigality, duelling, and of revenge in the extreme, and lays no stress on the opposite virtues." Contrast with this the pure morality of Scripture. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Is it said, that a refined education will discipline the mind and manners, and give consistency and respectability to character? It is admitted, that education is of high importance, and exerts a mighty influence on character. But that influence will correspond to the instruction and discipline employed. The harvest will exhibit a product of a nature like the seed that was sown. An education not conducted upon religious principles, nor exerting a religious influence, may indeed restrain and polish, may promote the courtesies and refinements of life, may produce benefits of a certain kind, and to a certain extent, but it cannot reach and control the inner man, and form it to virtue and happiness. It can never be said of any human system of instruction, as of sacred truth, in the eloquent language of the Psalmist—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors.—Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."—True religion can make the soul happy in the absence of a thousand supposed requisites to felicity. In poverty, there is no want which it cannot alleviate; in sickness, no pang which it cannot relieve; in reproach, no stain which it cannot wipe away; in bondage, no chain which it cannot lighten; and in death, no sting which it cannot take away. It brings a contentment which blesses poverty,—a patience which alleviates sickness,—a brightness which pours confusion on slander; a freedom from the bondage of corruption, which makes the rod of oppression light; a faith by which death is vanquished; and, in the latter end, it has "fulness of joy, in God's presence, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore." With what eagerness, then, should the young seize this "pearl of great price," this "one thing needful," this "good part which shall never be taken away?"

II. RELIGION ALONE CAN GUIDE, AND SECURE, AMID THE DANGERS WHICH ARE INCIDENT AND PECULIAR TO YOUTH.

Youth is full of ardor of feeling, and brightness of expectation; while destitute of that knowledge, experience, and discipline, which are necessary to instruct and fortify amid the perils by the way. A young man thus entering into life without the support and guidance of religion, is like a vessel with its sails spread open to every breeze, committing itself to the ocean without chart, rudder, or pilot, tossed to and fro in the darkness of midnight, conflicting with violent storms, and ready every moment to be dashed on the rocks, or

swallowed up in the abyss. The young enter the world with their imaginations lively and excursive, their desires strong and often impetuous, and their expectations eager and lofty. Their reason is without the aid of experience; their judgment is undisciplined; the world, whose treachery and falsehood are yet unknown, presents scenes to draw them from virtue and from peace. In such a state, what can avail to protect, save, and bless, but religion, extending its influence to the understanding, the affections, and the life? "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Thy word is a light to my feet, and a lamp to my path."

Ardor of feeling, and want of experience, combined, give rise to rashness and presumption, instead of that humility and caution which are so greatly necessary. Evil companions around ply many temptations, and lay many snares. These are the greatest dangers incident to youth. Attached to company, in the warmth of their feelings, and in the spring-tide of life, the young are not aware of their peril, until they fall victims. Many a promising youth, who seemed at one time setting out in the ways of piety, has been arrested in his course, by some evil associate, and ruined for ever. How different the result when a young man is brought under a sacred influence, which enables him to break from irreligious companions, and walk only with the wise? Wherefore, "take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life—enter not into the path of the wicked,—avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

III. YOUTH IS THE MOST FAVORABLE SEASON FOR ATTAINING AND CULTIVATING PIETY.

We have noticed the dangers arising from the buoyancy and ardor of youth, their want of experience, and the temptations by which they are continually solicited. But in this period, there are advantages which should be carefully regarded, and faithfully improved. Now the affections are more warm and tender, the conscience is more readily impressed, the mind is less filled with prejudice, and less swayed by the pride of opinion, than at any subsequent period. The heart is now unchilled by the commerce of the world, free from the callousness of age, and hence is more easily moved by the love of God, by the mercy of the Redeemer, by all those tender incitements to duty which the Gospel presents. The passions though more ardent, are nevertheless more manageable, more easily turned from improper objects, than when long indulged, and when habits shall have been confirmed. Hence the principles of piety commonly find, in the youthful mind, a soil most favorable to their implantation, growth, and fruitfulness. True, the human heart, like the natural soil, produces spontaneously only thorns and briars, and requires careful and diligent culture to prepare it for the good seed; and, at whatever period the good seed may be sown, it will not spring up, unless it be watered, and quickened by heavenly influence. But God operates in the work of grace, as well as in nature, according to an order established by himself. Thus youth is fitted and intended for improvement of every kind, for improvement in morals and piety, as well as in understanding and knowledge. And accordingly, in youth the living power of his grace is most frequently experienced. The cares of business, also, which occupy so much of the time and thoughts of men in subsequent life, do not entangle and occupy the young. The world cannot oppose them in such variety of ways, and to such perilous extent as it will do afterward.

IV. BY DELAY, THE DIFFICULTIES AND OBSTACLES, WHICH OPPOSE THE ATTAINMENT OF PIETY, ARE CONTINUALLY INCREASED.

As corruption is cherished, it gains strength: as habits are exercised

they acquire an iron force, and hold us in thorough bondage.—We resist the convictions of conscience, and the force of truth. The gratifications by which we have been tempted to evil, become more and more attractive and resistless. We are led at first to palliate what we cannot justify, and then we justify what before we condemned. Conscience is at first tender and readily quickened; it raises its warning voice, until, repeatedly opposed, it becomes silent: it awakens contrition and sorrow, until continually resisted, in the loss of every generous emotion, it becomes hard and callous. New and tender attachments to the world and sin are created, and old ones strengthened, so that links are daily added to the chain of our captivity; and we are more and more incapacitated to break the bonds thus increased and riveted.

God, who is rich in mercy, still adapts its dispensations to the constitution of our nature, and the discipline of truth, and love, under which he has placed us. He will honor his own institutions, and mark their abuse. But his grieved Spirit will not always strive with man. Hence the well-known fact, that a vast majority of those who have become pious, became so at an early period of life.—While the piety of the comparatively few who turn to God at a more advanced period generally assumes a far more doubtful character.

V. EARLY PIETY IS PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

“I love them that love me, and they that seek me *early* shall find me.” This special promise furnishes peculiar encouragement to the young. Religion in the soul is the fruit of grace, the operation of the Spirit. All hope in relation to it should be connected with the promise God has given. That promise stipulates, “they that seek me *early* shall find me.” Early piety is peculiarly *decided, cheerful, active, useful* piety. Such is the piety God approves, and delights in. Under the legal dispensation, God required the first fruits to be devoted to him. This typical service is realized under the Gospel dispensation, by devoting the first fruits of our reason and affections, of our days, and our services, unto God our Redeemer. Our blessed Redeemer himself was in all things a perfect model of early piety, in all its beauty and richness, in all its vigor and fruitfulness. He who on one occasion so kindly and tenderly said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” on another occasion observed with delightful interest the children in the temple singing hosanna to the Son of David, and said, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise.” No character is so much commended to the best feelings of our nature as youthful piety, in the conviction that it is the character which God peculiarly delights in. How lovely is young Samuel, the child of prayer, early responding to the divine voice, “Here am I,” and ministering unto the Lord. How interesting is young Timothy, in whom was “the unfeigned faith, which first dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice;” who, from his childhood, “knew the Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation, and to furnish him for every good work.” How distinguished is Abijah in the morning of life, the solitary one in the degenerate family of his father Jeroboam, in whom “some good thing was found towards the Lord God of Israel.”

VI. EARLY PIETY FURNISHES THE MOST DECIDED AND SATISFYING EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

The dedication to the service of the Redeemer, which the young disciple makes in all the vividness of his feelings, with all the bright prospects of this life unfolding to him, and in the enjoyment of health and prosperity, carries with it the testimony of sincerity, cordiality, and entire devotedness. It is a homage not forced, but freely given. He does not leave the world by constraint, as it forsakes him, while he would gladly retain it—but from deliberate conviction, he retires from it, or rather rises above it, when it presents its

inviting allurements, and unfolds the multitude and richness of its resources. In the full blaze of the world's light, he asks, "Lift thou upon me *the light of thy countenance.*" Amid the plenitude of the world's dainties, he prays, "Ever more give me the bread of heaven." Amid all the relations of life, he says, "In the saints and excellent of the earth, is all my delight." The piety which appears to commence in affliction is always dubious. The tears, and confessions, and supplications, and vows need to be tested by mingling in the converse and business of the world, in health and prosperity. Ah! most commonly that seeming goodness proves "like the morning cloud and the early dew." Sometimes, indeed, we are led to say, blessed was that affliction which opened the heart to God; as returning days of prosperity and continuance of life have testified. But how great an advantage is possessed by the youthful pilgrim, who commences his journey in the morning of his day, and continually presses onward; while he who, at a more advanced period, is, through rich mercy, brought to enter the course, remains far behind, struggling with difficulties and obstacles which have accumulated by his long delay, and were unknown to the former. The profession of religion in declining years, "when the evil days come, and the years draw nigh in which they say, we have no pleasure in them," too often resembles the case of Joab, fleeing to the horns of the Altar, when the peril of death pressed upon him; not for devotion, but in the vain hope of immunity from the judgment pronounced. How unlike the youthful worshipper, who exclaims, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." When the rare instance occurs of hopeful piety commencing late in life, it resembles the "short-lived gleam, which, after a day of clouds and of storms, bursts forth in the evening, but calls forth few sounds of joy in nature around, and yields little advantage to the labors of man." The youthful convert is like the morning light, "which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and in which all nature rejoices, and "man goeth forth to his work." "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear." If, while there are "fears without and fightings within," we are continually called to examine ourselves; if, while "laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset us, we are to look to Jesus as the Author and finisher of our faith," then truly early piety has a decided superiority as to the evidence of its genuine character.

VII. EARLY PIETY ALONE SECURES THAT FULL ENJOYMENT WHICH RELIGION IS DESIGNED TO IMPART.

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice all our day." "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." The direct influence of religion is to subdue evil passions, and to save from those vices which pollute and destroy. Man carries in his own bosom the elements of happiness or misery. "The good man is satisfied from himself." While on the other hand, "there is no peace to the wicked—they are like the troubled sea which casteth up mire and dirt." It is the office of religion to subdue and eradicate the elements of misery—and to implant and nourish the elements of happiness. It fixes just and firm principles in the mind, and diffuses kind, pure, and generous emotions through the heart. It exerts an influence on body and soul, producing soundness and health. It secures from those dangers which surround our path. It wisely directs our plans for life, and blesses us in our secular enterprises: it hallows and endears the connections of life, in the bonds of the Spirit. It does not prevent affliction—but it *converts it into a blessing*—ministers consolation to the wounded spirit—*imparts joy in tribulation*, and produces in the issue *righteousness and peace.*

Early piety secures the blessings of religion through the course of life, and secures them in the largest measure. If the choice of religion is sincerely and decidedly made in advanced life, still the habits which have been long indulged, insensibly and strongly draw the heart away from what is pure and spiritual. The pursuit of spiritual objects, which in earlier days would have been comparatively easy, is now tried amid continued agitation and conflict. The worldly habits of the young have not yet acquired such strength as to present any formidable opposition, while with unclouded minds and affectionate choice, they devote themselves to the Redeemer: waiting on him, they renew their strength, "they mount up with wings like eagles, they run and are not weary, they walk and faint not." Those who early become pious experience a purer and larger joy, from the fact, that they are saved from those corrupt associations of thought, which so much distract the exercises of later converts.

Youth has been termed the season of hope, manhood of active exertion, and old age of retrospection. The earlier scenes of life are sketched most vividly in our memory, and the early instructions we received remain indelible. When decrepitude of mind and body advances, recent events leave no impression, and the aged man continues to ponder on the scenes of youth long since gone by. As the book of his life opens before his memory, there is continually presented to view the page of youth, inscribed in bright and legible characters. Need we wonder, then, at the emphasis with which Scripture adverts to the "sins of our youth." Says Job, "Thou writest bitter things against me, thou causest me to possess the sins of my youth." Says David, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." In Jeremiah, penitent Ephraim is represented as saying, "I was ashamed, yea, I was confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Dark and cheerless is the evening of that life which has been spent in devotion to the world, and in neglect of eternal things; but calm and serene is the evening of the Christian—when his sun which rose fair and clear in the morning of life, goes down in full-orbed brightness, only to rise again in purer heavens, and in cloudless and everlasting splendor.

VIII. EARLY PIETY IS THE BEST PREPARATION FOR GREAT AND EXTENDED USEFULNESS IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST.

Life is at best but short, and ever uncertain. If even prolonged to the ordinary measure of human life, the period would still be short for the great work of making our calling and election sure, and glorifying God on earth. The days and years devoted to the world are not only lost as to the true and proper use of life, but they leave an influence behind them, which, if religion subsequently assume its sway, will minister such embarrassments, difficulties, and sorrows as will weaken its power, limit its benefits, and mar its comforts. Bitter must be that penitential regret which fills the mind of the late convert, when he reviews the past, as he purposes to begin a new life. The best of his days are irrevocably gone—the choicest period of his life has been spent in sin and folly. The peculiar advantages enjoyed by youth for attaining the knowledge, enjoying the comforts, and discharging the services of religion are passed away. He finds it exceedingly difficult to withstand the force of habit and associations—he finds every effort needed to carry on the conflict with himself and the world in a defensive attitude, while the early convert, having passed on his course consistently, constantly carries the attack into the very heart of the enemy's camp with success, and actively pursues the work of well-doing. Early piety furnishes seasonable and appropriate training for the Savior's service. In the parable of the talents, the faithful are represented as "trading" with their talents, and receiving gain—Use facilitates and directs the proper employment of our means and opportunities of doing good.

We gain increasing acquaintance with our own hearts, with human nature, with the temptations which attend us, and the difficulties and obstacles which must be encountered in the way of holiness and beneficence. The character of undeviating integrity, and of active, unwearied beneficence, more and more commends itself to the conscience and affections, and continually opens freer, and wider, and more numerous avenues to usefulness. A life from early youth exhibiting fair consistency, in one unblemished course of uprightness, purity, kindness, and beneficence, will furnish the clearest and most convincing testimony to the character and claims of the religion we profess; a testimony not readily misunderstood, nor resisted. "Who will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good." In later conversion, whatever evident change may appear, it will be difficult to inspire confidence. The effort to counteract the influence of past life will be exceedingly difficult, and in very many cases unavailing. Facility in the use and means possessed, and fertility in the invention of new methods to resist evil and do good, are wanting and are found unattainable. The pious youth enters the field in the morning, and, bearing the heat and burden of the day, with increasing skill and vigor accomplishes his work, and at evening finds a full harvest gathered. The later convert enters, perhaps near the evening, and having spent his time and strength in the service of sin, the world, and Satan, and gathered a harvest of vanity, he now proceeds with faltering steps, and feeble efforts to glean a few solitary light sheaves. It is difficult to calculate the amount of influence which may be exerted by a life early directed by piety, and extended to old age; difficult to say how many talents may be gained, by continued, careful, and skillful "trading;" difficult to estimate how much the Master may be glorified, and men blessed by the multiplied, varied, and ripe fruits of holy living, and beneficent exertions. "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age—they shall be fat and flourishing."

IX. TO YOUTH, AS WELL AS TO OTHERS, THE PRESENT IS THE ONLY MOMENT SECURED OR PROMISED.

"What is your life? it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." The folly of presuming upon the future, with the hope of rightfully improving it, has been shown. Every day spent in neglect of the "one thing needful," increases the indisposition to spiritual things, strengthens the power of corruption and selfishness, and increases the force of habit. The path in which sinners travel, is one which leads directly from God,—every step leads to a greater distance from him.—The way is downward and slippery—the force of motion is continually increased, the rapidity of descent is constantly accelerated. Who knows when the verge of the precipice will be reached, and the final leap shall be taken? Who in this course to hell dare presume on the future for an interposing power to arrest his accelerated descent, and deliver from the wrath to come? Who knows what a day may bring forth? Ah, sinner, before the light of this day passes away, thy lifeless body may wait the opened grave, and thy soul be in hell. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." How often do we find death arresting youth, sportive and gay, in the bloom of beauty, the vigor of health, the brightness of worldly prospects, and the endearments of earthly relations! On that sick bed, reflection on the past and apprehension of the future, seize on the spirit, notwithstanding the efforts of mistaken friends to prevent it. At last the certainty of approaching death appears in full view.—Oh, what alarm then seizes the conscience,—what pangs rend the heart! "In that very day his thoughts perish!" The world, as to all it gave, and promised, lost,—the

means of grace lost—heaven lost! He expires.—In that chamber of mourning and we, where the world's light is closed in utter darkness, not one ray of heaven's light penetrates the gloom. Follow the body to the narrow house, and trace the spirit to its eternal abode, and learn the emphasis of the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Early piety often meets with an early death. In such case we mourn, but not as those without hope. Having witnessed the promising blossoms, and enjoyed the earlier fruit, we are disappointed, and feel our loss in not being permitted to reap the riper and more abundant fruits. But the chamber where the pious youth dies is hallowed. There he who cordially relinquished the world for the pursuit of heaven, now finds himself at the threshold of the desired mansion. He ministers the lessons of affection and truth,—he calmly bids farewell to time and earth,—he testifies his firm and lively hope of heavenly glory,—faith triumphs, as in whispering accents, with beaming eye and placid countenance, he exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be unto God, who giveth the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" He falls asleep in Jesus. What fellow-youth standing by, would not say, "Let me die his death, let my last end be like his."

A venerable mother in Israel was standing by the deathbed of an amiable and pious daughter, over whose sickness she had long and affectionately watched: That daughter expired strong in the faith of Jesus, and exulting in hope. With placid countenance, and uplifted eye, in the fulness of her heart, that mother said, "I wish you joy, my dear;" and calmly retired, to seek that repose which wearied nature required. Here was an exquisite combination of the tenderest parental feeling, mingled with the loftiest triumphs of faith and hope.

Beloved youth, "Choose ye this day." Life and death are before you. To-day the Almighty says to each of you, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." "Incline thine ear, and hearken unto me; and I will be a Father to you." But to-morrow his grieved, insulted Spirit may say, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." O, then there would be "weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever." "To-day, then, if ye will hear his voice, *harden not your heart.*"—AMEN.

SERMON LXXIV.

BY AUSTIN DICKINSON, A.M.

APPEAL TO AMERICAN YOUTH ON TEMPERANCE.

1 JOHN, II. 14.—*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.*

1 COR. IX. 25.—*Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*

To remove a great national evil, the influence of the young is all-important. And the fact, that Intemperance is here sacrificing its thirty thousand victims annually, surely demands their special attention. *They can, if they please, put an end to this desolating scourge; and that without any sacrifice. Ponder then, beloved youth, the following reasons for abstaining entirely from ardent spirit.*

1. *The use of it will do you no good.*—It will not increase your property : no merchant would deem a relish for it essential to a good clerk, or partner in business. It will not invigorate your body, or your mind ; for physicians tell us, it contains no more nourishment, than fire or lightning. It will not increase the number of your respectable friends : no one, in his right mind, would esteem a brother or neighbor the more, or think his prospects the better, on account of his occasional use of intoxicating liquor. Nor will it in the least purify or elevate your affections ; or fit you for the endearments of domestic life : no parent, should you seek alliance with his family, would require you first to become a lover of ardent spirit ; for, saith the prophet, wine and its kindred indulgences “*take away the heart.*” Why, then, should a rational being, capable of the purest enjoyment, yield to a custom, in no respect useful ; but rather the occasion of countless miseries ?

2. Drinking ardent spirit, if it do no good, *is a great and wicked waste.* The use of only a single glass daily, by the ten millions of freemen in the United States, would, in fifty years, at one cent a glass, amount to *eighteen hundred millions of dollars* ; a sum abundantly sufficient to supply with colleges, academies, and schools, every city and district of our country. And yet, according to official returns to government, the amount of ardent spirit annually imported and manufactured in the United States, would far more than furnish a glass daily to each of ten millions ; and every body knows, that the average cost to consumers must be more than one cent a glass.

And let it be admitted, that all the time now employed in importing, manufacturing, distributing, and drinking this liquor, might be devoted to other business at least equally productive ; and here you have another item of *eighteen hundred millions of dollars wasted* : the simple *interest* of which, (exceeding one hundred millions per annum,) would be sufficient to support the Christian ministry throughout the nation, to pay all our public taxes, and to carry on great national improvements.

Add to these the enormous expenses of sickness, pauperism, crime, and premature death, occasioned in the same period by ardent spirit, and you have a *third* item of at least *eighteen hundred millions of dollars wasted*.—which would purchase a Bible for every inhabitant of the globe. Any one who has patience to calculate a little, will see that these estimates are far within bounds. And will our sober and intelligent youth, when they know these facts, be instrumental in occasioning such waste ?

3. Indulgence in ardent spirit *is offensive to the Giver of all mercies.* It is not a “creature of God”—any more than cards, or murderous weapons—but of man’s invention ; and of comparatively recent invention ; originating, like the Mahomedan imposture, in “the land of robbers.” Had the all-wise Creator deemed it absolutely *necessary* for man, can it be supposed that he would have suffered thousands of years to pass, ere the method of making it was known ? Or had He deemed the habitual use of it *good* for man, would He have created him with a disgust for it, which requires the insidious practice of sweetening and diluting to overcome ?

The spirit of the Bible, as well as uncorrupted taste, is in direct hostility to this intoxicating poison. Its uniform language in regard to all such impurities is, *Touch not, taste not, handle not.* He, who hath solemnly said, *Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God,* cannot, surely, look with complacency, even on those who *sip* the polluting cup ; and who, by their *example*, encourage others to drink still deeper in the pollution. Common sense, as well as piety, revolts at the thought.

On the other hand, strict temperance is pleasing to the Most High. Thus it was said of him, who was honored to announce the Savior’s advent ; “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong

drink." In the view of Omniscience, then, true greatness is associated with entire abstinence from this artificial stimulus.

4. The use of spiritous liquor, *has a perverting and debasing influence; and leads to other sensual indulgences; as well as to foul speeches and foolish contracts.* Men excited by this poison, will say things and do things, which in other circumstances they would abhor. They will slander, and reveal secrets, and throw away property, and offend modesty, and profane sacred things, and indulge the vilest passions, and abuse the nearest relatives, and cover themselves and families with infamy. Hence the strict and solemn caution of the Holy Book; "Look not thou on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup: at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder: thine eyes shall behold strange women; and thine heart shall utter perverse things." Those who by gaming or intrigue rob others of their property, and those who allure the "simple" and unsuspecting to the chamber of death and hell, understand this deceitful tendency of ardent spirit. Hence the exhilarating glass is presented as their first enticement. "*Is it not a little one?*" say they, with insidious smile; and so the unwary are "*caused to fall by little and little.*"

"She urged him still to fill another cup;
 and in the dark still night,
 When God's unsleeping eye alone can see,
 He went to her adulterous bed. At morn
 I looked, and saw him not among the youths:
 I heard his father mourn, his mother weep;
 For none returned that went with her. The dead
 Were in her house; her guests in depths of hell;
 She wove the winding sheet of souls, and laid
 Them in the urn of everlasting death."

Such is ever the certain tendency, if not always the fatal end of the insidious cup. For, says Solomon, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby, is not wise." The sentiment is reiterated by Isaiah; "They are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision; they stumble in judgment." And One infinitely greater than Solomon or Isaiah, hath said, that *drunkards* and *adulterers* shall go to the *same place of torment.*

5. *The habit of drinking once established, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to break off in more advanced life.* Thus, in this day of reform, and in places where the reformation is very general, there are individuals, even members of churches, so accustomed to drink and to traffic in the poison, that all the remonstrances of conscience, the wailings of the ruined, the authority of God, and the odium of public sentiment combined, cannot now restrain them. In despite of all, they still drink on, and, in some instances, even those sustaining important offices in the church, blush not, in this day of light, to deal out for paltry gain this article of death and perdition! O, could an angel speak to such men, he would thunder with Paul, "*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils.*" But our business and hope are with the young: Let the youth, then, who now turn with shame from such examples of inconsistency and guilt, beware of contracting a habit so *hardening* to the conscience, so *deadening* to the soul.

6. It is a solemn consideration, which must have great weight with such as reverence the Bible, that even *moderate drinking may for ever exclude the saving influences of the Holy Spirit.* Says one, distinguished by his writings and his extensive usefulness as a preacher; "If, while under conviction, a person allows himself to sip a little—he is sure to grieve away the Spirit of God." And this testimony, the result of long observation, is in perfect

accordance with reason and Scripture. For, (to say nothing of the deadening influence of ardent spirit on the conscience,) unless heaven and hell can work together, God *cannot*, consistently, send *his* Spirit to *co-operate with that spirit*, which Satan employs, more than any other agent, in fitting men for his service and kingdom: for, "what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" and how "can two walk together except they be agreed?" If, then, "ye know these things," and desire salvation, O, beware of "sinning against the Holy Ghost!"

7. To increase your disgust for ardent spirit, *think how the use of it prevails among the most despised and degraded portions of the community*. Inquire through the city or the village, for those who are so polluted by vice as to be shut out from all decent society, so changed to the image of the beast, that they cannot be looked upon but with abhorrence; learn their history, and you invariably find, that the bottle has been their familiar companion. Enter their retreats of midnight revelry, and you still find that rum is the all-inspiring divinity among them—that this spirit from beneath seems needful to fit them for the work of their master. And should not the most decided reprobation be stamped upon that, which is always found associated with the lowest state of debasement and crime?

8. Be persuaded to strict temperance by the reflection, *that in the purest state of morals, and in the most intelligent and refined circles, ardent spirit is not tolerated*. Who would not be shocked at the supposition, that this liquor was carried about by the twelve apostles and their Lord! or that it was offered to them at such houses as they found "worthy?" What assembly of divines, feeling the sacredness of their office, would now be found "mingling strong drink?" What select band of students, hoping soon to officiate at the altar of God, before the bench of justice, or in the chamber of affliction, would now call for brandy? What circle of refined females would not feel themselves about as much degraded by indulging in rum, as by smoking or swearing? What Christian church would not be shocked at a proposal for stimulating their social meetings with this noxious spirit? Or what parent, inquiring for an eligible boarding-school, would think of asking, whether his child might there be sure to have the aid of this stimulus? If then ardent spirit cannot be tolerated in the most moral, intelligent, and refined *associations*, why should it not in like manner be wholly discarded by *individuals*? Why should not the young, especially, of both sexes, keep themselves unspotted, and worthy of a place in the most pure and refined society!

9. Be persuaded to strict temperance, *by a consideration of its happy influence on the health and vigor of both mind and body*. The most eminent physicians bear uniform testimony to this propitious effect of entire abstinence. And the Spirit of inspiration has recorded, *He that striiveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things*. Many striking examples might be adduced. The mother of Samson, that prodigy of human strength, was instructed by an angel of God to preserve him from the slightest touch of "wine or strong drink, or any unclean thing." And Luther, who burst the chains of half Europe, was as remarkable for temperance, as for great bodily and intellectual vigor. "It often happened," says his biographer, "that for several days and nights he locked himself up in his study, and took no other nourishment than bread and water, that he might the more uninterruptedly pursue his labors." Sir Isaac Newton, also, while composing his Treatise on Light, a work requiring the greatest clearness of intellect, abstained not only from spirit, but from all stimulating food. The immortal Edwards, too, repeatedly records his own experience of the happy effect of strict temperance both on mind and body. And the recent reformatations from moderate drinking, in different parts of the land, have revealed numerous examples of renovated health and

spirits in consequence of the change. But not to multiply instances, let any youth, oppressed with heaviness of brain, or dulness of intellect, thoroughly try the experiment of *temperance in all things*, united with great activity, and he will himself be surprised at the happy effect.

10. The habit of temperance, being closely allied to other virtues, will secure for you the respect and confidence of the best part of the community, and thus lead to your more extensive usefulness, as well as prosperity and happiness. The youth who comes up to the resolution of entire abstinence for ever, and persuades others so to do, gives evidence of moral courage—gives evidence that he has the power of self-denial—gives evidence of an intellect and moral sense predominating over appetite, and selfishness, and the laugh of fools; and such is the youth whom a virtuous and intelligent community will delight to honor.

11. *Let true patriotism and philanthropy inspire you with an utter abhorrence of this national evil.* A thick fiery vapor, coming up from the pit, has overspread the whole land, and blighted half its glory. Tens of thousands of our citizens, poisoned and polluted by this vapor, and fitted only to dwell in fire, have yearly sunk down into that pit, to weep and lament for ever. Upward of four hundred thousand more, according to calculation, are at this moment groping their miserable way to that same pit, who, but for this pestilence, might have been among our happiest and most respected citizens. A still greater number, of near connexions, are in consequence covered with shame, weeping, and woe. Ah! who can say, he has no relative ruined by this plague? Three years ago, the infection had become almost universal. But God, in great mercy, has inspired his servants to publish the only remedy—**ABSTINENCE, TOTAL ABSTINENCE FOR EVER.** Great multitudes have already believed, and obeyed, and are now safe from the plague. The remedy is sufficient for the whole world. And, instead of costing any thing, its general application in the United States would be an annual saving of *many millions of dollars.* What youth, then, what child, that loves his country, that loves mankind, will not now co-operate with patriots, and statesmen, and physicians, and divines, and the respected of every name, in applying the remedy? Who does not see its certain efficacy, and the grandeur of the result? Who does not see that drunkards are all formed by moderate drinking? and that if the young will abstain, all drunkards now living will soon die, and the great national evil be exterminated? What youth, then, is so perverse, so cold to his country's glory, so devoid of philanthropy, that he will not abstain?

While Wilberforce was lifting his voice for the abolition of the slave-trade, three hundred thousands in Great Britain abandoned the use of sugar. And when our patriot fathers resisted foreign taxation, hundreds of thousands in this land renounced the use of tea. And could they thus abstain from things agreeable and innocent, because they hated oppression? and is there a patriot youth, who will not openly renounce that which poisons alike both soul and body, and inflicts both temporal and eternal bondage?

Were a foreign despot now landing great armies on our shores, and threatening to enslave the whole country, every youthful bosom would swell with indignation, every sword be unsheathed, and every bayonet pointed. And will you not combine to arrest the more cruel despot, Intemperance, who murders nearly all his prisoners, whose vessels are continually entering our ports, whose magazines of death are now planted in all our villages, and whose manufactories, in the very midst of us and throughout the land, are like "the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched?"

Were all who have the past year been found drunk in the land, now collected in one place, they would make a greater army than ever Buonaparte commanded. And yet those now on the road to drunkenness would make a

vastly greater army still. And these too, with myriads more that will come on in the same track, unless some patriot band interpose and rally the nation, are nearly all destined for slaughter, and for the world of wo.

Were one half the amount of liquid fire, that is swallowed annually by that army of drunkards, collected in one great lake, it would be more than large enough for all of them to swim in. And yet a vastly greater quantity is swallowed by the more numerous and more dangerous army of *moderate* drinkers.

Were those thirty thousand victims that annually descend to the drunkard's grave, cast out at once into an open field, they would cover five acres of ground with their putrifying carcasses. And yet far greater numbers are slain by the insidious practice of *moderate* drinking.

Were the thousands of distilleries and manufactories of the poison, that are now at work day and night in our land, placed in one county, they would blacken all the surrounding heavens with their smoke; and render that blackness still more terrific by the gleaming of their midnight fires.*

Could all the oaths, obscenities, and blasphemies, which ardent spirit occasions every hour, be uttered in one voice, it would be loud as "seven thunders."

And, my young friends, are those armies of drunkards, and that lake of fire, and those rotting carcasses of the slain, and those ever-burning manufactories, and those oaths and blasphemies in the ear of God, less appalling to humanity—less stirring to patriotism—because they appear every where throughout the land? Shall there be no general burst of indignation against this monster of despotism, and cruelty, and wickedness, because he has *insidiously* got possession of the country, instead of coming in by one bold invasion? Shall he now with his legions march openly through the land, and plant his engines, and forge his chains, and insult the Heavens, and strew the earth with desolation? Or shall he not rather, by universal consent, be arrested—when it can be done without cost, and with infinite gain?

It must not be forgotten here, that in nearly all the States, every male drunkard, of proper age, is a voter; and has equal power in the elective franchise with the most elevated citizen. Nor can it be concealed, that thousands of votes are every year purchased by this poison. Nor must it be forgotten, that, should intemperance increase for fifty years to come, in the same ratio that it did for twenty years previous to eighteen hundred and twenty-six, about one-third of our voters would be drunkards; and probably half the remainder somewhat intemperate. What then would be the character of our beloved Republic? What a spectacle would she present to surrounding nations! and how would she appear in the pure eye of Heaven!

But should the tide of intemperance still roll on, and, with the population, increase in the same ratio for *eighty* years, a *majority* of our voters would be drunkards; and our population then amount to **A HUNDRED MILLIONS**. Who then could rally the nation, and turn back the burning tide? Or who could govern the maddening multitudes, and save our ship amid the raging of such a sea of fire?

It is not a vain thing, then, that patriots and philanthropists have waked up to this subject. Their trumpet should thrill in thunders through the land; and in tones of redeeming mercy, should urge *all the young* to save themselves and their children. *These* can, if they will, cause the river of abominations to be dried up; and the pure river of God to flow in its place.

It is obvious, that if this great evil were wholly done away, *the Gospel would have far mightier sway*, and human nature generally would assume a much

* As early as 1815, according to the Hon. Timothy Pitkin's Statistics, there were in the United States, thirty-eight thousand five hundred and thirty distilleries!!

higher character. Pure intellectual and moral stimulus would take the place of that which is low, sensual, and devilish. Better health, better temper, loftier intellect, and more expanded benevolence would every where appear. Men, instead of sinking below brutality itself, would be rising in knowledge and purity, and striving to "be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect."

It is obvious, likewise, that Providence has great and happy events to be accomplished by the younger portions of this and our parent nation. Unto them, especially, are revealed those oracles which declare, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." And already do I see, in the silent kindling and expanding of unnumbered minds, the presage of a moral earthquake, that will prostrate every despotic throne, and "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Millions, trained in Sabbath-schools and kindred institutions, will soon be "sanctified through the truth;" and then "great will be the company of those that publish it." Sound in body and mind, and quickened by the Spirit of Heaven, they will be "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." The best talent in every department of life will then be put in requisition for the highest interests of man.

Who then, of the rising race, is so dull, so dead to generous feeling, so deaf to the voice of Providence, so blind to the beauty of moral excellence, that he will not now aspire to some course of worthy action? And what parent that loves his child, will not exult to see him aiming at the highest usefulness, honor, and blessedness of which he is capable? Let this motto, then, be inscribed on every dwelling; **HE THAT STRIVETH FOR THE MASTERY IS TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS.**

Can any father or mother still encourage the young to drink in the poison? Such a *mother* there cannot be. And if there be a father, whose "breath is corrupt," and who, to keep himself in countenance, insidiously poisons his children also, God will most assuredly curse him; a reformed community will despise him; and his own dear offspring may yet turn upon him, in agony, and curse him for ever. "*Wo to that man, by whom the offence cometh.*"

Nor let any parent rest satisfied with merely exerting no *bad* influence upon his child. He is bound by the authority of Heaven to exert directly a *good* influence. When it is said by the Most High, "that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," it is immediately added, "For I know him that he will *command* his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." And when again by his servant Moses, God recounts his great mercies, and portrays his coming vengeance on the violators of his law, in the most glowing language ever addressed to any nation; he solemnly adds: "Which ye shall *command* your *children* to observe, to do all the words of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

Let every parent, then, who would redeem this nation from intemperance, and make her great and happy, "the joy of the whole earth," not only "abstain from all appearance of evil," but, like "the father of many nations, command *his children and his household after him.*"

One word in relation to signing a *united pledge* for abstinence. As it respects yourself, it will be deciding the question, once for all, and thus supersede the necessity of deciding it a thousand times, when the temptation is offered, and when you may not be in circumstances so favorable to a correct decision. It will moreover supersede the pain of a perpetual *warfare* with appetite and temptation. And, as it respects others, of feebler minds and stronger appetites, your explicit *example* and influence may be immeasurably important. Multitudes may thus be secured to a life of entire abstinence, and

some reclaimed from drunkenness, who, but for this pledge, would never have had the requisite courage and firmness. Your influence may thus extend indefinitely, on the right hand and on the left, and down to future ages. And by such united efforts, great multitudes which no man can number, will be saved from a life of wretchedness, a death of infamy, and an eternity of blasphemy and wo.

Does any youth now say, *he* will unite in no pledge, because *he* is in no danger. Ah! you *may* be in imminent danger, which you do not see. But suppose *you are safe*; have you then no *benevolence*? Think how many a bosom must this very night be wrung with agony, over a drunken husband, or father, or brother! And have you no *pity*? Is your heart made of *iron*? Think how many millions of hopes for both worlds are suspended on the issue of the Temperance Cause. And will you do nothing to aid its speedy triumph?

Do you say, your influence is of no account, because you are small, or young, or poor? It was one poor man that saved "a little city," when "a great king besieged it." Another poor man saved a "great city," when the anger of Jehovah was kindled against it. Small as you may think yourself to be, you are accountable to God and your country; and your finger may touch some string that will vibrate through the nation; your prayer may "move the hand that moves the world."

But are you conscious of possessing some influence? and have you a tongue to speak? Then rally the circle of your acquaintance, and enlist them in the sacred cause. And do you *gain* a little by abstinence? Then *give* a little to extend the saving influence. What youth cannot spare six cents, to procure as many Tracts; and perhaps to reclaim as many families? And who can estimate the endless influence of those families?

But do you inherit *wealth*? Then speak by ten thousand tongues—send winged messengers through the city, the country, the town, the village, the harbor—and hope for your reward in that world, where, saith the Scripture, "neither thieves, nor *covetous*, nor *drunkards*, nor revilers, nor extortioners, nor *any thing that defileth*, or worketh abomination, shall ever enter."

I cannot close without just alluding to results, which must quickly follow, should the reformation, now in progress, be triumphant through the land. O, could the men, who first conceived the enterprise of freeing this great nation from intemperance, behold the object accomplished, as it were in a day, they would then feel, and the nation would feel, that nothing desirable is too hard to be undertaken. They would at once inquire, what other great evil needs to be removed, and *speak the word*, and with God's blessing *it would be done*. Reformation would thus follow reformation, till this whole land should become "a mountain of holiness," blooming all over with "trees of righteousness."

Meanwhile, other portions of the human family, beholding what Christian freemen can do, would emulate our bright example, and nation after "nation be born in a day."

Rise, then, ye young hope of your country and the world; exhibit one general combination of moral courage, intelligence, and purity; and, with corresponding effort, say to the whole earth, *that the hour of her redemption is come*.

Happy! thrice happy ye! who may thus have the honor of dashing away for ever the cup of drunkenness, and washing this foul stain from our country's glory. Happy the generation! who may rise up instead of the fathers, and, like the rainbow above the retiring cloud, reflect from one end of the earth to the other, the glories of a millennial Sun.

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Go....Teach all Nations....Matt. xxviii. 19.

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SERMON LXXV.

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THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

LUKE, XI. 5—13.

Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is his journey is come to me and I have nothing to set before him: and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

CHRIST was praying in a certain place, and when he had ceased one of his disciples entreated him to teach them to pray; upon which he gave them the form commonly called the Lord's prayer, and then subjoined the words of our text. The promise not only is direct and explicit, but is repeated no less than eight times, and is illustrated and confirmed in a variety of ways. There is first the successful importunity of the borrower: then there are twice three direct assertions: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Then follows the affecting appeal to the parental heart: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you

that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" The passage is thus subjected to the infallible annotation which is found in the parent's breast. I appeal to every father before me. If your little son who is dutiful to you, and who has had nothing to eat for three days, should come and kneel down before you, and put up his little hands, and say, Will papa please to give me a piece of bread? would you give him a stone? Where is the Cain or Judas that would give him a stone? The meaning being thus settled beyond the possibility of doubt, it is added with a surprising emphasis, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." There is no explaining it away. The promise is unqualified and direct. It cannot be misunderstood; it cannot deceive. It will be fulfilled as sure as there is a God in heaven. It never will fail in a single instance to the end of the world. It is however consistent with some delay. Indeed the case of the borrower plainly implies that the blessing is to be drawn forth by importunity. Thus it was in the case of Jacob; thus it was in the case of the Canaanitish woman.

What promises of temporal blessings may be made to prayer, I shall not at present inquire. I confine my view to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the only thing expressly named in the text. This gift may, in answer to our prayers, be bestowed on ourselves or others. But because the answer is more obvious when it works a great revolution in the character of others, I shall confine myself to this case. There is nothing in the promise to limit it to either; and other texts sufficiently sustain the connexion between the prayer of faith and the conversion of sinners. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." "When the Lord shall build up Zion—he will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." "Give him no rest till he establish, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." But without looking further, we see the truth of the promise as relates to an influence upon others, in every revival of religion. We see, at the commencement, a part of the church brought to those peculiar feelings in prayer which indicate the approaching conversion of sinners,—which awaken confident expectations of such an event,—and which never were and never will be disappointed. There is the fact before your eyes. There is indeed sometimes an excitement which proves transient and unavailing; but those who have had both sets of feelings, will tell you that it wants the most essential characteristics of the prayer of faith.

To the humble mind it appears almost incredible that God should be influenced by the prayers of such wretched worms, until it discovers that it is the Holy Ghost which prays. Believers are called the temple of

the Holy Ghost, and he is represented as seated in that temple and praying for them : and God, as he comes down to examine the heart, is represented as hearing and understanding this intercession. " The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." No wonder that God hears prayer when it is the Holy Ghost that prays. What an awful place is the Christian's closet. The whole Trinity are about it every time he kneels, There is the Spirit praying to the Father through the Son.

There are many prayers offered up for the effusions of the Spirit, even by Christians, which never appear to be answered. There are many prayers in which God probably sees some good, which cannot claim the abounding promise of the text. It becomes then a question of infinite importance, What are the attributes of that prayer to which this glorious promise is made ? I confess with shame that I know very little about it ; but as far as I am taught, they are the eight following.

1. Earnest desire. Not the ordinary desire of Christians even when they long for a revival of religion ; but a desire which almost breaks the heart ;—a desire which swallows up every other ;—which is more intense than any one can conceive who has not felt it. The man goes bowed down all the day long under sorrows too great for him to bear, because men keep not God's law,—because they are bound to that land of darkness from which there is no return. He sees it utterly impossible for him to enjoy life any more unless the Spirit be poured out from on high. Give him the world, he is not satisfied ; offer him a throne of glory, and it does not fill the aching void. Nothing in the universe does he desire so much. Nothing else in the universe will satisfy him. The mighty care hangs immoveably upon his heart. It goes with him from morning till noon,—from noon till night,—and cannot be shaken off for any other matter. It is the last to press upon him when he sinks to sleep ; it is the first to meet him when he opens his eyes.

2. Submission. Every man has an individuation of existence and of consciousness peculiar to himself, and of course possesses a personal interest which is his own and cannot be another's. Every parent has a social interest which is his own and cannot be another's. These the anxious individual and parent feel it an infinite privilege to bring to God. And they may bring them to God with throes unlimited but by submission. Let submission bound the reachings of their desires, and in all other respects they may give them full scope.

But with all the anguish of his desire, the man of faith does not set up the interest of the dearest object against the interest of God, nor his own will against the will of God. While his very soul goes out in pantings after the good in view, his supreme wish is that the infinite

Mind may reign over every event. It is farthest from his thoughts to dictate to God or to counsel God. He has no idea that God is loath and needs to be urged. He does not dream that he is more benevolent or compassionate towards a perishing world, than he who sent his only Son to die,—than he who has borne with them and called after them for so many years. Though his heart is ready to burst with desire, he would not for worlds take the decision out of the hands of infinite wisdom and love.

3. Dependence. Not a mere, though full, assent of the understanding that the power is all of God; not such a feeling of this truth as Christians ordinarily possess; but such a sense as accompanies a soul-consuming desire when that truth is written with a sun-beam before the eye, and settles down into the heart as a great reality, and is rested upon as the last resort of an anguished mind and as its firm support. Such a sense as we may suppose, (if it is lawful to suppose,) a Christian would feel if shut up in hell and looking up to God to remove the bolts and bars. It is a deep felt reality that no other agent in the universe can lift a pall or a napkin from the dead; that all the preachers on earth are no more than the rod stretched out over the Red Sea, or the trumpets sounded before the walls of Jericho. The man goes forth with an eye lifted to heaven and fixed as marble, saying as he goes, "My soul, wait thou only,—only,—only,—upon God, for my expectation is from him." When he prays, (and he wants to pray all the time,) he casts himself helpless at the feet of God, resting every issue on his will, and summing up all his hopes in the language of the leper, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst." As he goes from house to house where the heavenly influence begins to fall, he feels that he is only carrying a torch to hold to the tinder which God has prepared. I knew a preacher who under such a sense scarcely looked at his audience during a whole service, and cared not whether they were asleep or awake, feeling that the question of a revival did not lie between him and them, but was to be settled in heaven: and glorious effects followed the exercises of that day. O it is sweet, at such a moment, to lay the salvation of friends,—of a world,—over upon God, and commit it to him without one dissenting feeling through all the soul.

4. An earnest and diligent use of means. With all this sense of dependence and nothingness, the man cannot sit still. It is no part of his impression or his creed, that to lie at the bottom of a hill and wish one's self on the top will carry him thither. He is as much engaged to get at the consciences of men as though he could do every thing himself. Is he a pastor? he cannot rest till he has carried the message of God to every door and to every conscience. He goes again and again where his concentrated anxieties lead him, to see what has followed from his exhortations and prayers, and to watch every symptom of the moving bones. He will go through heat and cold, through rain and sleet, by day and night, full or fasting; and will preach, pray, and exhort, and visit

from house to house, till his strength fail. If the dearest friend would interpose to stop him by a ceremonious visit, that friend is unwelcome. Every thing is in the way that would hinder him in his work. He does it all because he believes that his great Master orders him to the work and assigns him every part. It is the sweetest luxury to feel that he is at work for Christ.

5. Deep humility. He feels utterly unworthy of the least favor,—utterly unworthy to be used as an instrument of grace to others,—infinitely unworthy to stand where God is passing by. He abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. He trembles lest his mountains of guilt should obstruct the way of the Most High. O the sense which he has of his backslidings! such a sense as perhaps never weighed him down before; a sense which he does not however wish to put off, but desires greatly to increase. His past ingratitude breaks his heart, and he longs to get down into the deepest dust,—lower and lower still,—and feels that he never can get low enough. He *loves* to repent. He feels it a luxury to grieve. He covets the lowest place in the dust more than he does the throne of an archangel. Is he a parent? O how does he feel when, taking an attitude to put forth all his strength in agony for his children, he is forced to say with tears, “Although my house be not so with God.” In short, he is just prepared, if God hears his prayers, to give him all the glory, with wonder, love, and gratitude.

6. Faith. But what is faith? Faith is the belief of a divine testimony. It is the belief of nothing which is not found on the sacred page. It is not a belief therefore that George, who is sick, will live, or that William will be saved. It is not a belief that a revival of religion will come at Boston in 1830; for neither Boston nor 1830 is found on the inspired page. It is not a belief that my prayer in particular will be answered: but it is an open view of that glorious truth, set forth on a field of light, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” It is a great thing to wake up in the presence of God and find him in the midst of his family with all the father’s heart, and more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than parents are to give bread to their children. This is no ordinary experience even in the Church of God. It introduces the Christian himself into a new world, or into one which he has seldom seen. O what mercy and compassion are seen melting in the heart of God; what sincerity and truth are stamped on the promise; what certainty and reality that God has said it. The man believes it as firmly as he believes his own existence. He would risk a million of souls on its truth. He sees it as clearly as he sees the sun at noon-day. He is confident that if he does not succeed, it is because he does not offer the prayer of faith. And after he has heaved the strong desire and grasped the throne with both his hands for weeks, and has arrived at the conclusion, “If this is not prayer, and in some measure the prayer of Penuel, I never prayed;”

he comes to the settled belief, "If *all* the objects of my solicitude go down, I go down with them without regeneration." So strong is the impression lodged at his heart that the promise is true and that the prayer of faith will not be turned away.

Faith in the promise is not a belief that my prayer in particular will be answered; for my prayer is not named in the promise. The stipulation is, to give the blessing to me *if* I offer the prayer of faith. I must first be conscious that I do pray in faith, before I can have any evidence that I shall receive the blessing. The expectation of receiving is a logical inference from the fact that I have prayed in faith; an inference which is often instantaneous, and to a passing view seems incorporated with faith itself. Yet it is not faith but hope. Hope indeed involves faith, as it rests on the divine word; but as that word is conditional, it rests too on the persuasion that I have fulfilled the condition. This is hope; and it ought to be clearly distinguished from faith. For want of this distinction people adopt a language which makes faith something different from a belief in a divine testimony. They say, I have faith to believe this thing and that thing, neither of which is named in the divine word: a notion about faith which may lead to the wildest enthusiasm.

In accordance with this notion is a theory of faith widely different from mine. It is, that we are to drop right down upon the confidence at first, that we shall have the things we are about to ask for. Then, either the promise is absolute, (*viz.* that we shall have the things whether we ask in faith or not,) or faith rests on nothing and is presumptuous.

But though nothing but a divine declaration is the object of faith, other events may be confidently expected, from a reliance on the promise made to the prayer of faith, and as an inference from the fact that such prayer has been offered. In this way one may arrive at a strong hope that God is about to revive his work, and perhaps that an individual is to be saved. His hopes of a revival may be greatly strengthened by witnessing a similar struggle in others. In these ways he may arise to "the full assurance of hope." Why should he not, as well as to the assured hope of eternal life, provided the Holy Ghost, no less than heaven, is promised to the prayer of faith? especially as the applicability of the promise rests equally in both cases on the operations of his own mind.

It ought to be considered that it is possible for us to put forth all the essential acts of believing prayer before we get to our knees, or even form a proposition in our own minds: we may look to God and reach after him and confide in his truth. And a persuasion that we shall obtain the blessing may grow up out of these reachings of faith, before we begin formally to pray. And this inferred hope, (for the mind is conscious of these reachings, and makes the inference, when its movements are too rapid to be easily remembered and analyzed,) may have led to

the belief that the first actings of faith itself consisted in a confident expectation of the event.

7. Perseverance. By this I do not mean a mere continuance in prayer, or a resolution to continue; but a holding of God to his word, and a fixed determination to continue at his feet till the blessing comes. This ground could not be taken without faith; for it is a venturing of every thing on the impossibility of his recalling his word; it is a laying hold of unchangeable truth and refusing to let it go. When the anxious Christian discovers that the promise is as infallible as the truth of the eternal God, he sees that he may indeed take hold of it and draw the blessing down;—that he may lawfully keep hold of it until the blessing comes. He at once grasps it with both his hands, and says, “Here I plant myself down, and on this spot I will receive the blessing or die. Call me a dog; tread me down with thy feet; but here I will lie till death or the blessing comes. I risk every thing on this foundation, and if this will not sustain me let all sink together. Thou hast committed thyself to me by a promise which I know is eternal truth and cannot be recalled; and I fix upon it a grasp which I will never relax. I hold thee to thy word and will not let thee go.”

So felt Jacob at Penuel; so felt the Syrophenician woman.

Sometimes when the Christian is forming these bold purposes, a solemn doubt starts up: “Is not this holding of God to his word a taking from him the right of sovereignty?” He starts at the suggestion, as though, while in the pursuit of all that he holds dear, a wall from heaven had dropped upon his path. He leaves every other subject to examine this. He throws both his eyes far into the regions of truth, and soon the solution meets his gaze: “Had not God given me a spirit to hold him fast, I should have been a clod. His sovereignty was exhausted in the decision respecting that gift.” When a dam has been suddenly thrown across a rapid stream, and the waters have risen and beat against it, take the dam away and how impetuously will the torrent sweep. When this obstruction is removed, and the anxious Christian sees the whole field open between him and God, and not a fence nor a bar in the way, O how does his impetuous spirit rush.

8. An absorbing regard for the glory of God. A man has a right to bring a personal or social interest to God, with no other limit than submission. When I read the accounts of the publican and the father of the lunatic, I see nothing on the face of either but the bringing of a personal or social interest to God or his Son, with faith and love and no doubt submission. I see no evidence that their minds were taken up in considering how God would be seen and honored in their relief. And they certainly were accepted. I dare not therefore say that no prayer is answered which is not marked with this characteristic. Yet I think that the signal success which stamps the broad mark of approbation on believing and persevering prayer, is not to be expected till we have got

beyond personal and social interests, to an all-absorbing desire for the glory of God. Here is an anxious parent whose prayers have long been marked with the first seven attributes, but not with the eighth. He has constantly brought the interest of his children to God with no other modification or limit than submission; but he has brought it with an anguish of spirit which has well nigh laid him upon a bed of sickness. In one of his long midnight agonies, while he is urging the entreaty that the heart of stone may that night be turned to flesh, something says, "No; let them first be more deeply convinced of their sin and ruin, that they may know what they owe to our redeeming God and his dying Son;—that they may see the distinctive glories of the God and Saviour of lost sinners." Their personal interests, which have pressed like a mountain so long upon his heart, are swallowed up and lost, and the all-absorbing desire is, "That eyes so dear may see the glory of our redeeming God and his dying Son; and that souls so dear may show in their salvation the same glory to the universe." He now sees, as he never saw before, what it is for God to be glorified, and he knows that he desires this object more than all others. The next morning his prayers are answered in a manner which he never will forget.

I confess I know very little about this matter. I am ashamed that I know no more. But as far as I am instructed, these are the essential attributes of that "effectual fervent prayer" which "availeth much."

My brethren, have you ever found upon yourselves all these marks of believing prayer? If you have, and have seen nothing follow, I give up the doctrine. But you must prove beyond the possibility of a doubt, that your feelings, both in kind and degree, came up to this standard. But if you never felt thus, do not deny the doctrine till you have made the experiment.

My dear brethren, how much you might prevail to bless your houses and to bless the world if you would live in this believing frame ~~at all~~ time. You might see a revival of religion around you ~~continually~~. This faith must become general in the Church before the world will be subdued to the empire of Christ. A miserable race are going down to death by nations for want of this spirit among the friends of God. There is great guilt in this thing. There is cruel ingratitude to the Sufferer of Calvary, and to that kind Spirit who has done so much for us and offered so much to us. Is not the God of truth to be believed, when he confirms his promise by an oath; an oath sworn by himself; "that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation"? Rise up, my dear brethren, to a higher confidence in God. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Enlarge your desires. God takes it ill that you ask ~~so little~~. He says, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." He takes

it ill that you expect so little from him. "The Lord taketh pleasure—in those that hope in his mercy." O if you could expect enough, and believe enough, and ask enough, I know not what you might not obtain; I know not what deliverances you might accomplish in the earth. The age is fast opening when the triumphs of prayer are to be every where displayed as they never were before, to draw the creation up to God, and to perpetuate the union by the bond of eternal confidence. "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." And when a nation shall be born in a day in answer to prayer, that strong language of a condescending God may be written on our banners, "Concerning the work of my hands command ye me." Children of God, lift up your heads in hope. Heirs of all the promises, take strong hold of your Father's covenant. And on you also shall be stamped the name of Israel: for as a prince you shall have power with God and shall prevail. Amen.

SERMON LXXVI.

By EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D.D.

THE HEAVENLY MIND.

ROM. VIII. 6.—*To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

THE apostle is contrasting a carnal with a spiritual mind. By a carnal or fleshly mind he means that which is natural to man, according to those words of our Saviour, "That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*." By a spiritual mind he means that new and holy temper which is produced by the Spirit of God; according to the words of Christ subjoined to the former, "That which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*." "To be carnally minded," says the Apostle, "is death: [to follow the bent of nature is spiritual death, and leads to eternal death:] but to be spiritually minded is life and peace:" [to have those dispositions and views and aims which the Spirit of God produces, is spiritual life, and leads to eternal life, and brings with it present peace.] The flesh and the spirit are repeatedly contrasted by this apostle. "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. Now the works of the flesh—are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.—But the fruit of the

spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "The fruit of the spirit," he says in another place, "is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." These catalogues show you at once what is meant by a spiritual mind; and the contrast between the spirit and the flesh shows you how contrary to nature it is to exercise such a mind. I say, contrary to *nature*; for *flesh* does not mean *sin*, (as its works just enumerated might seem to imply,) but *unsanctified nature*; according to the language of the same apostle in another place, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The whole movement of that which is called a spiritual mind is contrary to fallen nature. It is an up-hill motion, and requires great effort. Every step of its course is self-denial. A man who would live easy and go where nature leads him, will never attain to a spiritual mind. He must enter in earnest on a conflict with nature, and wage a war, if not of extermination, at least of absolute conquest. There is no life, no peace, further than he does this.

But that part of the spiritual mind to which I wish to draw your attention, is what is called a heavenly mind. It consists of the following ingredients: (1.) a deadness to the world; (2.) an eye habitually fixed on heaven, like Abraham, who "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God;"—like the rest of that holy family, who, unmindful of the country "from whence they came out," desired "a better country, that is, a heavenly," and "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (These two ingredients are coupled together in those emphatic words to the Colossians: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.") (3.) Such a walk with God as Enoch maintained; consisting in an intimate communion with him, (involving a clear view of him and a consciousness of living in his presence,) and consisting also in a will moving in the same line with his will, and leading to all that holy and beneficent action, (under the form of obedience,) which God himself pursues.

The heavenly mind, thus constituted, is supported by that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is accompanied of course with an open view of God and Christ, and all those things which exist in the kingdom of God. It is conscious of God's universal agency, and depends on him for all things. It is familiar with his mercy and truth, and trusts him unwaveringly. It sees the reality and sincerity of the appointment of Christ to his mediatorial work, and is accustomed to contemplate his fitness and sufficiency for that work,—his fulness and glory,—and approves and receives and relies on him as a complete and universal Saviour. Of course it is accompanied with a sense of acceptance, and in its higher actings, with "the full

assurance of hope," which brings with it that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

This is the heavenly mind. To attain this is the greatest happiness on this side of heaven. The man who possesses it lives in a world independent of the world without. Riches and friends and even health may depart, but in this new world he finds a supply of all things. Amidst all the changes of life he has here a stable inheritance. To possess this is far more than wealth or honor, even as present happiness is concerned. It is the highest wisdom to bend all our attention to the acquisition of this. How then shall it be obtained? This is a question of the greatest personal importance to us. How can the heavenly mind be obtained?

My first remark is, that it must be received from God, and of course must be sought with a deep sense of dependance on him. God must be acknowledged as the sole Author of holiness, and we must never think to go forth in a course of independent exertions to obtain it. We must carry about our hearts the constant impression that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;" and must go forth with our eyes fixed on the heavens, saying as we go, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." The most holy men are they who have the most of this dependance; and in proportion as it is entire will be their supplies from above. Nor must we look for the gift from God but through a Mediator. The intervention of a Mediator was not indeed intended to hide the original source; and we must constantly feel that that source is in God. But we must also realize that the blessing cannot come from God but as the reward of Christ's righteousness, nor be dispensed by any other hand than that of the Mediatorial King; that though it comes originally from God, it must come, in this twofold sense, through a Mediator. Hence Christ is set forth as the more visible and immediate source of supply: ("I am the vine, ye are the branches:") and a dependance on him for supplies is made the very bond of union by which we grow into him and find a channel of communication from him to us. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Nor must we overlook the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit. We must be sensible that this is the divine Person who immediately does the whole work, and that the influence comes from Christ only as the Spirit, in the economy of redemption, is placed under him as his reward. In this way must we depend for sanctification on the sacred Three: on the Spirit as the immediate Agent; on Christ as the One who by his merits obtained the Spirit for men, and by covenant right, as Mediatorial King, directs all his movements; and on the Father as the original Author of the gift.

And because the whole furniture of a heavenly mind comes from God, my second direction is, that we must ask him for it in a course of habitual and earnest prayer. The man who would rise up above the

standing of ordinary Christians and attain to the elevation and serenity of a heavenly mind, must be much in prayer. It cannot be gained by any other means. Not an instance can be found since the conversion of Abel, of one raised to this enviable height who was not pre-eminently a man of prayer. The inseparable connexion between prayer, (in this more full and intense degree,) and a heavenly mind, depends on the two following principles. First, as every degree of progressive sanctification is wrought in answer to prayer, this higher degree must be accomplished in answer to fuller and more intense supplications. God could indeed give without prayer; and the indolent are ready to imagine that, being unchangeable, he will bestow according to his eternal decree whether men pray or not. But the truth is, that God acts according to the known laws of holy mind, and bestows his richer favors only where there is an object to draw forth his special regard. Such an object is a praying saint; and the prayers as really affect his heart as they could the heart of any earthly parent: his unchangeableness not standing in the way; for as he exists in one eternal now, the prayers have been before him as early as his existence, and eternally and unchangeably affected his heart. By thus allowing himself to act according to the known laws of holy mind, he is enabled to display his real character in a manner intelligible to creatures: and by the reciprocation of asking and bestowing, he makes it manifest that he is the source of all supplies: and by thus rewarding supplicants, he encourages creatures to approach him and commune with him and grow up into eternal union with him. On these accounts he will not grant his special favors but in answer to prayer. And when this principle is established, it is plain that the more constant and intense the prayers are, the more ample will be the supplies. The reason then is obvious why the man who would receive so much as to lift him up to a heavenly mind, must be pre-eminently a man of prayer. But there is another reason for the close connexion between the two. A praying spirit is in its very nature the heavenly mind; and in proportion to its fulness and intensity is the heavenly mind perfected. Or to reverse the proposition, the heavenly mind is in its very nature a spirit of prayer. A mind of heavenly tendency will naturally breathe after God, and reach towards him, and love to communicate with him. To think then of having the heavenly mind without being much in prayer, is to think of having the thing without the thing itself. On both of these accounts the man who would possess the heavenly mind, must be pre-eminently a man of prayer.

Thirdly, he must be much employed in heavenly meditation. The very idea of a heavenly mind is that it is familiar with heavenly things and deeply affected by them, and by that means abstracted from the world. The first link in the chain is familiarity with heavenly things. And this cannot be acquired without being frequently conversant with them. You cannot be familiar with a friend without frequent intercourse

with him. You cannot be familiar with books without much reading. You cannot be familiar with any art or employment without repeated practice. So you cannot be familiar with heaven without frequently visiting it in your thoughts and pondering over its glorious objects. There must be seasons for fixed meditation, when every other object is excluded ;—seasons distinct from those set apart for prayer. In these seasons the mind must ponder deeply, undividedly, and for a considerable time together, on the different objects and employments of the heavenly world, on its glorious Author, on the Saviour and his work, on the day of judgment, on the shortness of time, and the like. Without these set seasons the *art* of meditating will never become easy. There is as much an art of meditating as an art of singing, and no more one than the other can be acquired without practice. When the mind has become accustomed by these set seasons to drop every other object and to bend its whole attention upwards, and when the thoughts have thus become trained to their flights, it will be easy and sweet to meditate. And the art of commanding the thoughts being thus acquired, it will be easy to redeem from waste and employ in heavenly meditation the hours spent alone in riding or walking or in labor. By this means the soul can live in heaven the greater part of the time, from morning till night and from day to day ; and the effect on its holiness and happiness will be immense. Indeed there is no acquiring a heavenly mind in any other way. See you that eminent saint who stands distinguished in all the country around for his sanctity and benevolence, and as one who walks with God ? He never reached this elevation by any other means. If you could go back into the history of his closet and his private hours for the last twenty years, you would find that those waste moments which others devote to frivolous thinking or lose in a vacuum of thought, he has employed in heavenly meditation, and that he acquired this habit in seasons specially set apart for this exercise. You look upon those superior Christians who live on the verge of heaven, and wonder how they arose so high. You need not wonder more. One of the secrets is now out. For many years they have been largely employed in heavenly meditation.

Fourthly, the man who would attain to a heavenly mind must be conscientious and punctual in his attendance on all the means of grace. It must not be a little thing that shall keep him from the house of God or from the prayer meeting. He must be a faithful and conscientious attendant on sacraments. He must be systematic and inflexible in his private devotions, and in reading some portion of Scripture or other devotional book every day.

Fifthly, he must watch. This is a point of the utmost importance, and is frequently in Scripture joined with prayer. Our hearts are a tinder-box, ready to take fire from every spark ; and the whole atmosphere around us is filled with scintillations as from a furnace. Without the most constant watchfulness some flame will secretly kindle that will burn

up the whole frame of a heavenly mind. There is very much in the memorable command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." *Keep thy heart* : guard every imagination and thought and feeling. Keep it *with all diligence* : let it be thy daily and hourly work. Turn not thine eye away : let it be constantly fixed on that moving thing within thee. Have the arm of thy resolution near thee to seize it the moment it attempts to fly. If you were set to keep a bird, unfastened, upon the palm of your hand, you would know what is meant by keeping the heart with all diligence. Watch also the approaches of the enemy and all the occasions of temptation. Watch your words and actions. Watch the approaches of Christ and the motions of the Spirit. Watch the providence of God as your instructor and guide. Watch for opportunities of doing good. The man who intends to live above the world and keep the face of heaven unclouded, must have his eyes about him. He must not suffer imaginations and thoughts and feelings to come and go as they please without examination or care. A heavenly mind is a well regulated mind ; and to regulate a thing so complicated and volatile, is as difficult as to govern a kingdom. In this as much as in any thing lies the difference between those eminent Christians who walk with God, and those gay and easy professors who fall in with the manners of the world. One class are keeping their hearts with all diligence, and are cautiously feeling their way, and examining every object around them, and comparing it with the standard of the word ; and make this the daily toil and business of life : the other class flit along without examination or care ; and if no actions or words escape them which the decent part of the world would condemn, they inquire no further. These are never likely to attain to a heavenly mind, and I am afraid they will never reach heaven itself.

Sixthly, the man who would attain to the exalted dignity and serenity of a heavenly mind, must pursue a course of habitual and universal obedience. I do not say a course of sinless perfection, but a course of obedience extending to every branch of duty, and constant enough to constitute a habit. Every deliberate sin tends to grieve away the Spirit. The frequent recurrence of known sin will therefore cut the sinews of faith and devotion and prostrate the soul in the dust. A man can never mount up and abide at the high elevation of a heavenly mind without pleasing God by an habitual course of filial obedience.

I may add here, that the man who would reach a heavenly mind must be, like God, much employed in doing good. There are two extremes to which practical religion has been carried. In one extreme it has produced the man of beneficence, who had little to do with devotion, and had perhaps a very superficial knowledge of the truth ; in the other extreme it has produced the man of retired devotion, with his many experiences, but who never did any good. Neither is likely to ascend to a heavenly mind. The man of beneficence with little devotion, has many exquisite gratifications ; but his business is chiefly with his

fellow-men : the man of devotion without beneficence, may have some intercourse with his Maker, and in the ages of ignorance, when his neglect was winked at, might have had some elevated views of truth ; but in these times of light, when the call for beneficent action is loudly heard from heaven and earth, he can never be admitted to an intimate walk with God. God will not walk with any man who is so unlike him as the retired monk, who, with all his prayers, will not give a cent or put forth his hand to save a world from death.

Seventhly, it is necessary to the attainment of a heavenly mind that a man possess a single eye ; that he be not divided between the world and God and keep a double object in his view. He must have reached that point where he feels himself habitually not his own but the servant of another ; where he goes forth daily to his work, not principally to please himself, but to serve his heavenly Master ; where his desire of gain is chiefly prompted by a wish to obtain the means of extending the Redeemer's kingdom. To have two masters, or a double object, is to have an evil eye ; to have a single object, as the one which controls the heart and life, is to have a single eye. None but those who answer the latter description can live in the unclouded light of heaven. What saith the Scripture ? " If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light ; but if thine eye be evil, [double,] thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Those professors of religion whose principal object from month to month is to get gain, will certainly never obtain a heavenly mind ; and if there is any truth in the Bible, they will never reach heaven itself.

As it is necessary to have a single eye, or a single controlling object, in order to enjoy the light which brings the elevation and serenity of the heavenly mind, it must be manifest that too much involvement in worldly cares is unfavorable to this attainment. There are indeed instances in which men of large business and wealth in an eminent degree walk with God ; but it is only where they have written HOLINESS TO THE LORD on all their possessions, and of course retain the single eye. We cannot therefore make a law that Christians shall not embark in extensive business ; for some, we see, do this with great advantage to the kingdom of Christ. But so many are the temptations connected with such a state, that for one I bless God that I am excused.

Finally, a man cannot expect to ascend to this holy and happy elevation without setting his mind upon it as the personal good to which all others must submit, and decreeing in his heart, (with a proper dependence on God,) that he will attain to this though every thing else be lost. He must determine to have this whatever else is given up,—to have it at all hazards and sacrifices,—to make every thing else bend and give way to this. He must say, and continue to say, " God helping me, I must and will have this. Let every thing else go : this is my point ; this is my all." The man who thus resolves and perseveres, in the manner already described, *will* obtain this most desirable good. It is an old maxim, that if

a man says, I will be rich, he will be rich. The meaning is, that if he resolves to be rich at all hazards, and makes every thing else bend to his purpose, and has no other object day or night, and sticks at no hardships or self-denials; the probability is that he will succeed. The same may be said of a resolute pursuit of learning, and indeed of almost every other object. But there is a certainty in the present case which does not attend any other; for God has promised success. "Seek and ye shall find:" "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat:" "Delight thyself in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart:" "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Here then is a good within the reach of every man who will feel right and do his duty. And it is worth more in the present life than thrones and kingdoms. And now the question is, will you drop every other concern and rise up to this pursuit? Not one of you is excluded from spending your life high under the arch of heaven, far above the world, in full view of the heavenly city, knowing that to be your eternal home, and sheltered there from all the cares and troubles of life. The means by which you can make the ascent have been pointed out. And now the question is, will you come up to this high and holy life, or will you grovel still in the dust, sighing, suffering, dying? There is but one mind that can decide for you, and that mind is your own. What say you now, my brethren? Will you start from your slumbers and take hold of the strength of God and mount? or will you lose it all and linger still in the dust? If the latter, complain not hereafter of the want of comfort. If the troubles of life find you sleeping in their own domains, accuse not God. Be it remembered *then* that you had an opportunity to escape from them all and live above their reach. If dismal doubts find you and break your peace, remember that you have none to blame but yourselves; for you had the offer of an abode in the confines of the New Jerusalem, surrounded with light that would have chased every fear away. My brethren, you are all eager for happiness. Now the way is pointed out in which you may obtain it: a short way; the only way. You have met with disappointments in the world. Some of you have been unfortunate in business: others of you have lost near and dear friends. You find below only what breaks your heart. Now then let us escape from all these and live above their reach. Let us go up and be happy. Blessed be God for these tidings to sooth the anguished mind. Blessed be God for this offer of rest before we die. Our habitation here is desolate; thanks to God that he has offered us an abode so near his seat. O my brethren, let us gratefully accept, and nerve ourselves with strength to climb the heavenly road. Let us tread every idol beneath our feet. Let the wide world be dead to us. And let us say to our Father looking out of heaven, Lo, I come, I come,—
Amen.

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SERMON LXXVII.

BY MARK TUCKER, A.M.

TROY, N. Y.

THE GUILT OF INEFFICIENCY AND DELAY.

JEREMIAH, iv. 14.—*How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

THIS expostulation was addressed originally to Jerusalem, when threatened with invasion. The inhabitants knowing that judgments were from Heaven, to avert the danger, externally reformed: but they were directed, if they would be secure, to correct the source of the evil—to wash, or purify their *hearts*. This they were slow to do. The duty was plain and imperative, and connected with their highest interests. Hence the solemn expostulation of the text; “*How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*”—That is, How long wilt thou continue to cherish sin, after thou art convinced of its ruinous consequences? How long wilt thou neglect an imperious duty which is connected with salvation?

By vain thoughts we understand *feeble resolutions, ineffectual purposes, good intentions never performed*. This disposition to suffer the present opportunity to pass unimproved, with the secret purpose of renewing the effort in future, this dilatory, inefficient spirit, is the sin of our common nature, and the fatal destroyer of much good. It is our purpose to *expose the prevalence and the evil of this spirit of procrastination*.

This disposition is discovered as early as the appearance of intellectual and moral powers. You perceive it in children. They are always planning something for the morrow; little is accomplished because they are promising to do more—because a delusive splendor invests the future.

Youth is literally the season of promise; the imagination is filled with images, the mind with schemes, the heart with good intentions; the picture glows with all that is bright and excellent; but these brilliant purposes, these enchanting creations exist only in thought: the fair morning passes away and nothing is *done*. Thus, for the most part, insensibly glide the first stages of human life. And when the young man might be expected to be disciplining his mind to severe habits of study, some dream of ambition, some airy hope, some fascinating purpose often dissipates the thoughts and breaks up intense application. Sometimes, indeed, waking from his day-dream, and remembering that sound knowledge is not acquired but by the most patient and persevering industry, the student returns to his task with determined purpose—only to learn the feebleness of his resolution and the instability of his nature. Generally, when he has completed his preparatory course, his attainments are so limited that he reproaches himself for

indolence and vain thoughts ; and, alarmed for the future, he keenly feels that if eminence and usefulness are to be reached, the wasted morning of life must be redeemed by increased efforts.

The apprentice and the clerk are subject to the same delusion. They are professedly preparing for the duties of after life : and it is quite natural to relieve the tediousness of present toil and confinement by flattering prospects of the future.

If we go out through all the walks of life, we shall find the same spirit of delay lurking in every path, stealing upon every class of men, relaxing the sinews of exertion, and narrowing the field of usefulness. The man of business accomplishes but little to what might be effected if his energies were steadily concentrated to some important purpose.

The same spirit of delay is manifest in matters of *religion*. It were well if only in temporal things men suffered from indulging vain thoughts ; if the loss respected only knowledge, and reputation, and wealth, the evil would not be so alarming ; but it affects eternal no less than temporal interests, and brings ruin in the next as well as in this world.

It prevents some from a thorough investigation of the *divine origin of the Scriptures*. If the Gospel be true, it is the most important overture ever presented to man. But many never examine it. They are aware of the absurdity of rejecting an unopened message, therefore they *resolve* to investigate the evidence at some future time. But the period of leisure and inquiry does not come—worldly objects engross the mind, and probation ends, while the great question is unanswered,—the great interest lost.

These vain thoughts prove the ruin of multitudes who profess to receive the gospel as a *revelation from God*. They admire the wisdom and purity of its precepts ; they acknowledge the truth and holiness of its doctrines ; they often tremble under the weight and fearfulness of its sanctions ; still they are conscious of a deficiency. They do not love, though they receive the truth. They do not devote themselves to the business of “ working out their salvation.” A flash of conviction sometimes breaks on the mind to discover the darkness that rests upon it, and to presage coming wrath ; they are disturbed for a moment, they resolve that *soon* they will forsake their idols and turn to the living God. They occasionally read the Scriptures, and so far regard the Sabbath as to be present ordinarily in the house of worship ; still they withhold their hearts from God. They respect divine institutions, but never “ strive to enter in at the strait gate.” And though the apprehension that they *never shall* be interested in the great salvation, at intervals rises in the mind, and for the time discloses earth’s vanity, they are not yet prepared in good earnest to seek the kingdom which endureth. Some unfinished scheme, or natural indolence, or a habit of procrastination, detains them in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity.

The realities of the *next* world are not seen with sufficient clearness nor felt with sufficient power to break up inordinate attachments to *this* ; thus the season of probation wears away, the day of merciful visitation closes, the summer of life ends, and the soul is not saved. The last sickness comes sooner, *much sooner*, than was anticipated. They thought the preacher extravagant when he spoke of imminent danger and urged immediate *repentance*. Though reproved by an awakened conscience, they feared

the sneer of the scorner, more than the wrath of Heaven. Thus to keep peace with their companions, they provoked the Almighty : and thousands more, uninstructed by their fatal end, rush forward in the same course, and perish the same way. Delaying sinner, *how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

These vain thoughts have destroyed *many anxious sinners*. When the Spirit of truth has moved upon the conscience, awakening a sense of obligation, reviving past sin, and pointing to the way of life, this same spirit of delay has deceitfully promised a *more convenient season*. After the urgent business or positive engagement, for which an immediate compliance with the divine requisition was put aside, is disposed of ; after the time fixed to attend to the weighty concerns of the soul, is gone by ; some *other* excuse is offered, some other impediment arises, and conscience is again silenced by another deceitful promise. Thus its sensibility is blunted and the blessed Comforter grieved ; the harvest is past and the soul not saved.

The peculiar danger of indulging vain thoughts in these circumstances arises from the relief that is given to the mind. No sooner is the resolution formed to attend to the subject *hereafter*, than the pressure is taken from the conscience. The Holy Spirit, convincing of sin, shows *our present* obligation, presses the duty of *immediate* submission, marshals the divine threatenings against all unrighteousness, and urges a speedy flight from the coming wrath. But by resolving to obey this warning at *some future time*, fearful apprehensions are quieted. We claim the credit of *having done well*, when we have only *resolved* to do ; we cry, peace, peace, when we have only shut our ears, without silencing the thunders.

O, how many, once placed in the good providence of God in most favorable circumstances, visited by the Spirit, surrounded by anxious and praying friends, and blest with evangelical instruction, have lost these precious seasons by indulging the vain thoughts of a better opportunity. The favorable period did not arrive—the disposition to seek God did not return—the persuasion of eternal things did not revive—they had quenched for ever the light of conviction—and *the end of these things is death*.

If we can defer the business of salvation, when the conscience is awakened with a sense of guilt, the feelings excited with an apprehension of danger, and the heart softened by the appeals of mercy, shall we be disposed to attend to it, when the apprehension is gone, the excitement suspended, and the interest transferred to other objects ? If, with a prosperous wind and spreading sails the mariner cannot reach the haven, will he gain it in a calm ? O, how preposterous to desire a more convenient season, when you *now* possess every facility for gaining the haven of eternal rest ! Are there any here who are solicitous to know the way of life, who have any impression of their sinfulness ?—beware of this spirit of procrastination. If you cannot *now* embrace the gospel, you *never* can. “*Now is the accepted time*”

These vain thoughts often injure those who hope they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, *by preventing their union with the visible church*. Many, after all the knowledge which spiritual conflicts and spiritual teaching have given them of the deceitfulness of sin and the depravity of the heart, after having been delivered, as they hope, from the

condemnation of the law and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, still neglect to assume the responsibility of a public profession. They build their hopes of heaven upon Christ, and yet refuse to honor him.

The duty of believers professing Christ before men, is strongly urged in the gospel. But a stand so open and decided is by some delayed. Under pretence of obtaining better evidence, or from a fear gravely expressed of bringing reproach upon religion, one of its most solemn and imperative duties is neglected. The importance and the urgency of it are less and less felt. The return of a communion season, the sight of the sacramental table, the example of others, revives the impression—another purpose is formed, but it has not sufficient strength to triumph over the obstacles ; it respects the future, and only soothes the conscience of the delinquent. Meantime cares and business engross the mind—months and years roll away—the duty that was deferred, ceases to be regarded as a duty. The sad and melancholy result is, that what began in scruples and fears, with occasional purposes of amendment, ends in confirmed and sullen neglect.

Are there any here who have cherished the hope of acceptance with God, but have not acknowledged him before men?—is there not reason to fear that a hope which cannot induce you to come out from the world, will perish when God takes away the soul? If, with all the impression made by the affecting scenes through which you were led, you can live in the omission of a plain positive duty, why indulge the vain thought that your purpose of obedience will gain strength? It will become more feeble, while the obstacles will become more serious and formidable. Once indulge these vain thoughts in your heart, and you will be in bondage all your days.

These vain thoughts, these ineffectual purposes lodge in the hearts of *Christians* also. We mention two unhappy effects: *They prevent the growth of personal religion; and they retard the work of benevolence.* It is the privilege and the duty of the disciples of Christ to make progress in the divine life. The transition of a soul from darkness to light, from the bondage of sin to the liberty of Christ, from the condemnation of death to justification of life, often, from the suddenness of the change and the novelty of the views, gives an unwonted spring to the mind: the pleasantness of the impression naturally induces the hope that the bright morning will never be overcast with clouds, that the relish will not soon be lost—but the melancholy truth cannot be concealed, that the power of indwelling sin was not entirely broken, that the old man was weakened but not subdued, that the enemy was stunned but not conquered. The believer is made proprietor of the promised land, but the Canaanite remains in it to be a thorn and a snare. A little experience will teach the Christian that the apostle's account of his conflicts and struggles with an evil heart of unbelief was not peculiar to himself; he also will find a law in his members "warring against the law of his mind." He will not be satisfied with his attainments. Often, grieved at the deadness of his heart, the languor of his zeal, the unfruitfulness of his life, he resolves to rise up to greater spirituality, to give himself more constantly to prayer, to meditation and to laborious duty. In his retirement he looks upon the world as it is, a dangerous enemy to spiritual religion, a source of powerful temptation, a wilderness where enemies and trials are to be encountered: But weeks and

months pass away, and the work of sanctification appears to be stationary. None of his expectations are realized, none of his purposes are accomplished; instead of a series of victories over the world and the flesh, there has been little else than a succession of disappointments. Often does he exclaim with Paul, *O, wretched man that I am!* He does not live as he hoped—as he determined to do. Instead of getting and maintaining the ascendancy over the world, he is the creature of circumstances; he is too late, too indolent, too remiss, too pliant—he is not what he ought to be. Instead of making a covenant with his eyes, and setting a watch upon his heart, he is affected by every temptation and every assault. He has little enjoyment, where he expected nothing but happiness; instead of soaring with the eagle, he creeps upon the earth; he is perpetually dissatisfied with himself, and yet never reforms. Sometimes a solemn providence crowds eternity on his mind, darkens earth's splendors, and deepens the impression of divine realities; then he resolves to live no longer to himself, but to Him who died for him: and hopes he shall never again sink into stupidity and neglect. Alas! like Samson shorn of his locks, he wist not that the Lord had departed from him. His reform was only in his purpose. Thus years roll away, and instead of reaching the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, he is the least of all saints; instead of the full assurance of hope, he is filled with doubts as to the reality of his spiritual birth. He walks in darkness, though light is sown for the righteous. These melancholy results are to be traced immediately to the vain thoughts that lodge within us. *How long* shall we continue to indulge them?

The same spirit of delay retards the Christian's efforts in the work of *benevolence*. The Bible explicitly teaches him that he is not his own, that he is not to live to himself, but to Him who loved him and died for his redemption, that he enjoys his privileges and possesses his treasures as well for the benefit of others, especially the household of faith, as for his own happiness. And the Spirit of Christ which dwells in him, prompts to the same enlarged and expansive course. When therefore the duty of caring for the souls of others is urged, when the various plans of Christian charity are proposed, he feels the kindlings of benevolence, and resolves to engage in the good work with zeal. But some pressing business requires immediate attention, or some emergency demands all his present means—and the opportunity is suffered to pass unimproved. He knows that if local churches are to be built up, or if the kingdom of Christ is to be extended, it is by great personal exertion and sacrifice, by generous and continued donations: but when the call is made, he finds himself reluctant, and dares to wait for a more convenient season. He would be sorry to see the cause suffer, and hopes that every benevolent effort will be sustained; and, perhaps with sincerity, regrets his supposed inability—while, in truth, the real difficulty is in the disposition; for he can command the time and the resources necessary for any purpose of self-advancement.

He has never done much for the extension of Zion, but he has always *intended* to do; he has watched the progress of events with interest, and rejoices in the prosperity of the Church—but never as yet has been able to give substantial evidence that he *loves Christ more than houses or lands*.

O, how many deceive themselves by saying, "Be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding they give not those things which are needful."

Another illustration of the prevalence of this fatal spirit of delay is found in the *neglect of all men to prepare for death*.—The grave is the house appointed for all living; and the startling summons is sent in an hour we think not. The youth is liable to be cut down in the freshness of his hopes, the anxious mother even while troubled about many things, and the man of business in the midst of his labor. Preparation is necessary to meet God in peace. The sinner must renounce his idols, repent of his sins, and believe in Jesus Christ; the Christian must set his house in order, cleanse his heart, and watch unto prayer. But the work is deferred. The season of youth is spent in vanity, the vigor of life is devoted to the world, old age with its impaired memory and inveterate habits advances. A sudden death, an alarming visitation, in unequivocal language seems to say, *Be ye also ready*; some serious thoughts pass through the mind, some resolutions are formed, but time and business wear out the impression, and no preparation is made.

Even the Christian, melancholy truth, defers the work a little longer. He would turn pale at the summons *now*;—his evidence is obscured, his hope wavering, his temper worldly; he has little enjoyment, his heart is cold, he has left his first love; he is conscious his Divine Master has much against him; he could not meet his Lord; still he cries, "A little more sleep." His lamp is not trimmed, nor does he examine his vessel to see if it be filled with oil. O, man, *how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

Again we remark, these vain thoughts, these feeble inefficient resolutions lodge in the hearts of *Christ's ministers*.—There is no profession that requires more energy and decision of character, more perseverance and fixedness of purpose, than that of the ministry. The most important duties are to be performed, the most serious obstacles to be overcome. On no class of men do vain thoughts produce more disastrous effects.

Every conscientious and enlightened minister of the gospel feels, when he is invested with the awful functions of the sacred office, that he is deficient. When like Paul he kneels at the feet of his Master to receive his commission, he is ready to ask, "*Who is sufficient for these things.*" He resolves to give himself to study, to prayer, to duty. He sets his standard high. But too often it is the case, that year after year steals away, and he is yet in the vale. The eminence is not reached. The habits of regularity and order established by his preparatory course are relaxed. His mind, instead of being stored with the thoughts of the great men of other days, is dissipated. He is losing the power of close investigation. The habit of reasoning is exchanged for desultory remark; his studies, the result of necessity, are performed at distant intervals, and in a hurried manner, utterly unbecoming a teacher of righteousness.

While he thus suffers vain thoughts to lodge within him, he will exhibit, year after year, "the same unvarying complexion of intellectual character, without any perceptible progress in comprehension of mind, power of thought, or extent of knowledge;" his resources will be soon exhausted, "*his sermons, instead of presenting things new and old, reiterate ideas*"

perfectly familiar, in forms of expression which may be almost anticipated." Meantime, indolence on the part of the minister induces torpor on the part of the hearers : so that pastor and people either sink down into ruinous indifference, or a growing dissatisfaction ends in his removal.

Of all men, therefore, an ambassador of Christ should be most free from vain thoughts : his mind should be disciplined to regular as well as vigorous exertion. Not a day, not an hour should be lost— but each should have its appointed and appropriate duty.

We have time only to allude to one other topic—*the effect of a procrastinating spirit upon great Christian enterprises, and revivals of religion.* In the accomplishment of objects connected with voluntary efforts every thing depends upon favorable opportunities. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." All the benevolent institutions that have prospered, have been taken hold of with energy and managed with promptitude ; and a few leading spirits have done it. In many instances much disappointment has been occasioned by the indolence and dilatory movements of those to whom were intrusted important interests. The man who is always resolving, and forming brilliant schemes, and does nothing, is a serious hindrance to the work of the Lord.

The effect of these inefficient purposes is not less melancholy in preventing revivals of religion. These outpourings of the Spirit are bestowed in a sovereign manner ; still prayer and effort are indispensably connected with them. It is not unfrequently true that the most favorable appearances invite the pastor and church to engage with fresh vigor in the grateful work of leading sinners to Christ—The fields are white to the harvest—but week after week passes, and nothing is effectually done ; family visitation is not commenced—direct and faithful dealing with sinners is deferred ; the church is suffered to slumber : the goodness that was visible vanishes like the morning cloud, and a season of greater drought succeeds. Looking at the mourning ways of Zion, her deserted feasts, her darkness and desolation ; and connecting with these, the inefficiency and vain thoughts of her professed friends, we might ask, with great earnestness, *How long shall we continue to slumber ?*

Who can calculate the infinite mischief of this spirit of delay ? But for this, great plans of usefulness to the world had long since been accomplished, and many schemes, projected to enlighten and bless mankind, had been finished. Many who have been endowed with high intellectual powers, neglecting to seize the present moment, have died without benefitting their species, and thus gone with but a miserable account to their Judge.

This subject addresses itself in most impressive language to *the impatient, especially the youth.* Most gladly would I awake such before the clouds gather into a storm, and they are engulfed in eternal ruin. *How long wilt thou sleep, O sinner ?—Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord.* Let me ask that part of this assembly who are in the gall of bitterness, to canvass with me this all-important subject. Can you reasonably suppose that the happiness of heaven would be a suitable reward for your present course of living ? Can you hope to receive a crown without the semblance of a conflict ? Is enmity to God a spirit that will be allayed by a charm ; or subdued by a dying prayer ? No ; sin is in our nature ; it

strengthens as we become impotent ; it fastens upon the seat of life, and obtains a lodgment in the very fountain of desire—it waxes strong by stripping us of our power, by enfeebling our reason, by perverting our will, by souring our temper, by seducing our passions ; every day the understanding becomes more dark through the deceitfulness of sin, the spirit more impatient, the appetites more impetuous. Every hour of delay, therefore, reduces us to more hopeless servitude.

Nor is this all ; the day of salvation hastens to a close. Life is a vapor. The shadows of death are impending. Sinner, can you fold your hands, and say, “ I pray thee, have me excused ”—“ go thy way for this time ? ” Ah, while you delay, God is frowning upon you, sin is binding you in triple bonds—hell is enlarging herself and moving to receive you. *This very night thy soul may be required of thee. “ How long then shall vain thoughts lodge within thee ? ”*

This subject should cause *deep humiliation in Christians*. After all the illumination of grace, all the teaching of the Spirit, all the sacredness of vows, and all the expectations raised by covenant engagements, how inexcusable our low attainments in personal holiness, our irregular and feeble efforts in the cause of benevolence, our unpreparedness for the coming of our Lord. And can we still sleep, when so much is to be done, when the day is far spent, and eternity is near ? Rather let us who are of the day watch and be sober, *putting on the breast-plate of faith and love ; and for a helmet the hope of salvation*.

This subject should bear on the hearts of *Christ's ministers* with thrilling interest and mighty power. No men sustain so great a responsibility—none are required to aim so high. Every day they are exerting an influence which reaches to eternity. Their language, therefore, should be, *This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Their high calling is most intimately connected with all the great interests of man, and the honor of the Redeemer. Their standard of mental furniture should of course be elevated—and their tone of moral and religious feeling lofty and decided.

As the influence of habit is almost irresistible, we ought, as we value our character, as we value the cause of truth, and the approbation of God, we ought to establish correct principles of action, and thus fortify our minds against a depraved nature, the seductions of a vain world, and a host of counteracting causes. All men are naturally indolent ; this tendency should be resisted, as we would resist a sworn enemy. If vain thoughts are suffered to lodge within us, they will induce a morbid state of feeling fatal to improvement, fatal to success, and most ruinous to the church of God. How then shall we be rid of them ? I answer, they are to be expelled by the strictest economy of time. It is by taking small liberties at first, that principle is prostrated and destroyed. If we spend a few moments to-day unprofitably, without compunction, we can waste more to-morrow without regret. Time is more than money ; for money, if lost, can be recovered, but time once lost is gone for ever. If parsimony then be allowed any where, it is in the saving of time. The man who is prodigal of this, who is not careful to fill up every moment, to keep himself usefully

employed, will never be free from vain thoughts. We ought, therefore, each day, each hour, to hear God speaking, "*Time is short, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*"

Finally, vain thoughts are to be expelled by studying the best *examples of piety, perseverance, and efficiency*. First of all, the life of our blessed Savior is a perfect model. What time did he consume in indolence? what in splendid projects or visionary plans? Every moment was well occupied. Even when strongly urged to rest, he said he must be about his Father's business. The apostle Paul in this respect imitated his Master. What incredible zeal, what untiring perseverance, what determined resolution, what holy fervor! Even anticipated suffering, imprisonment, and death did not move him or damp his ardor. Some of the fathers, also, exhibited a holy decision of character, an exemplary method of living, which enabled them to accomplish wonders. The lives of Cyprian, of Augustine, of Luther, of Elliott, of Cotton Mather, of Brainerd, of Wesley, of Scott, of Martyn, while they pour shame on our indolence and inefficiency, inspire the loftiest spirit, the most ardent devotedness, the most unshrinking fortitude, and show at once the practicability and the importance of *living wholly to God*.

"These suns are set,
O when shall others such arise?"

SERMON LXXVIII.

BY MARK TUCKER, A.M.

MAN HUMBLED AND GOD HONORED.

1 COR. iv. 7.—*Who maketh thee to differ from another?*

NOTHING can be more foreign to the spirit of the gospel than pride, or inordinate self-esteem. Being in ourselves utterly destitute and unworthy, whatever gifts or moral excellence we possess, the glory is due to God. In proportion to our elevation should be our gratitude and humility. The conduct of those teachers in the Corinthian church, therefore, who placed themselves at the head of a party, and of those Christians who supported them, was deeply censurable. To expose the baseness of this self-seeking spirit, the apostle adverts to his own feelings and conduct. *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written; that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ?*

For highly-gifted individuals to *display* themselves, is to evince the basest ingratitude, as well as a most criminal neglect of the best interests of the church. Whatever gifts any one possesses, they were *bestowed*, and for the good of the whole. The question of the text, proposed to humble the

pride and correct the vanity of the Corinthians, may be put, at the present day, to promote the humility and excite the gratitude of Christians. *Who maketh thee to differ from another?* The question will apply with as much propriety to *Christians* as to public *teachers*. The text suggests two points of discussion—the *reality* and the *author* of the difference between the righteous and impenitent sinners.

I. *There is a difference* between the righteous and the wicked.

It is an offensive fact, and in every age attempts have been made to annihilate the distinction; or if it is acknowledged, it is made to consist in forms and mere circumstantials which affect not moral character. But there is a broad and radical difference. It is important to ascertain in what respects. *Not in original character.* There is no foundation for it in nature. The apostle expressly says, *there is no difference by nature, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* In another place, speaking to the Ephesian Christians, he says, *We were by nature children of wrath even as others.* And many of the most amiable are left in the gall of bitterness, while publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven.

Not in natural faculties. If those only who were highly gifted, were called of God, they might seem to have whereof to glory; but *not many mighty or noble are called.* God often chooses the *weak things of the world to confound the mighty.* Natural gifts therefore are not the ground of difference.

Not in outward privileges. Both have the gospel, the Sabbath, the ministry of the word, and all the appointed means of grace. Both are called, the invitations of the gospel and the chastenings of Providence are alike addressed to each. But there is an essential difference,

1. *In their present state.* The Christian is *justified*; the sinner is not. His sins are remitted, he is accepted in the Beloved. This distinction is made in unequivocal terms by Him who cannot err; who will judge all men. *He that believeth on him (the Son) is not condemned*; i. e. is pardoned and received to favor; *but he that believeth not is condemned already.* Again: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Though many regard this as a slight difference, the time is coming when it will appear wide as the gulf between heaven and hell. In entering a court of justice there might not appear, to a superficial observer, any difference between two individuals standing together in the crowd; but when it is found that *one* is under sentence of death for a capital crime and is in the hands of the law, while the other enjoys all the immunities of citizenship, we feel at once that there is an essential difference in their condition. When referred to the righteous and the wicked, it is as great as the love or displeasure of God. They who are justified are at peace with their Maker, while he is *angry with the wicked every day.*

The one class are *adopted* into the family of God; the other not. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.* They are treated as children, put under a salutary discipline, made heirs of an eternal inheritance. That this is not a mere nominal, unimportant distinction, is evident from the joy excited in heaven, when it is announced, there is an heir of glory born. They are *also called children of light and children of darkness.*

The Christian is said to be *in Christ*; the sinner is not. *If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature* The believer is chosen *in Christ* and is regarded *in Christ*, and will be saved in him. This strong expression denotes an entire change of state. There are other terms equally expressive. The Christian is brought out of darkness into marvellous light—out of a state of nature into the kingdom of God's dear Son:—*He is risen with Christ*. If one alive and active is in a different *state* from one locked in the grave, then there is a radical difference between the state of the righteous and the wicked. This will not be fully understood and felt till their eternal destinies are fixed.

2. There is an essential difference in *character*. Philosophers have doubted whether any such difference existed; they say that the distinction between good and evil, as applied to character only, denotes different grades or degrees of the same general nature; that one man may be better than another, but has no class of feelings essentially different. This may look plausible in theory, but is not true in fact. The express declarations of Scripture and the experience of Christians are both opposed to it. All those passages which describe a moral renovation, are too strong to denote merely circumstantial difference, or degrees of the same character. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things are become new*. Again: *That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. I see not how terms could be more expressive of a deep and thorough change of moral nature. The *spirit of the mind* means the habitual reigning disposition. This in a Christian is radically different from his former feelings—and from the feelings of the impenitent. The Christian loves God, the unrenewed man does not. This love is not a feeling of gratitude for favors received, or arising from a selfish expectation of future happiness, but a complacency in moral excellence, a supreme regard for the holiness and perfection of Jehovah. Its language is, *Whom have I in heaven but God, and there is none on earth I desire beside him*. Instead of such a desire towards God, the natural man does not love to retain God in his thoughts. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be*. The best evidence of feeling is conduct. Accordingly, the Christian loves to pray, to meditate in retirement, to read the Bible, and speak of the things of God; he loves the Sabbath, as it gives him an opportunity to retire from a world that embarrasses and disturbs him, to commune with God, the object of his supreme affection. He loves the courts of the Lord's house, because there his mind is brought in contact with divine things, in which are all his delight. But the unconverted man cannot pray; it brings him too near to God, whose holiness offends and whose power alarms him; he has no hours for meditation and reading the sacred Scriptures, because he has no relish for them. When he enters the sanctuary, it is not to behold the glory of God, or to become acquainted with himself, but to relieve the tediousness of unoccupied time, or gratify a vain curiosity.

Moral character is determined by preferences and aversions. The

Christian approves of the divine law, he justifies its claims and its sanctions. The sinner finds fault with it; its requirements are too broad, its penalty too severe. The Christian hates sin; he regards it as the greatest evil, not more because it exposes to punishment, than because it pollutes and unfits for heaven. The sinner rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue. Neither the retribution that here follows its commission, nor the terrible denunciations to be executed upon it in the next world, prevent indulgence. For all this the sinner transgresses still.

The Christian exercises godly sorrow, and faith in Jesus Christ; while he is broken and contrite in spirit, he is strong in the Lord. He has unlimited confidence in the divine declarations, and commits his soul to the Redeemer. Nor is the difference less marked and broad here. The sinner, if he grieve at all, is grieved, not that he has dishonored God or broken his law, but that he is exposed to divine wrath. Nor is he willing to make one sacrifice, or forego one pleasure for the sake of Christ. Thus we see, in view of all those spiritual objects which are a touchstone of moral feeling, there is a distinction as plain as between light and darkness.

3. Also in their *actual conduct*. Those who are interested in throwing a shade over the lines of distinction, deny this too. They say, Christians live like the world; are as fond of display, as much attached to wealth, as eager for enjoyment, and as easily warped by prejudice, or led away by temptation, as other men. We have no disposition to palliate guilt, or to deny facts. It is doubtless true, that many have a name only to live, that Christians often bring a reproach on religion, that there is too much worldliness in the Church; but it is *not* true that real Christians live like the world. There is a difference in their *outward conduct*: certainly in the performance of religious duties. The Christian believes there is a God, and that he is bound to serve him. Follow him through the Sabbath, through the week; how does he live? (Give his history for a week.) Is there no difference? There is a strictness and integrity in his intercourse with his fellow-men, which arises from a conviction of his responsibility. He is conscientious when he is not under the eye of man; he remembers that the eye which never slumbers nor sleeps watches him. There is also an essential difference in their *principles* of conduct. The *motive* decides the moral character of actions. Indeed, the motive is an essential part of the action. They who are supremely devoted to the world, whose portions lie below, cannot act from any higher motive than temporal interest. Self-aggrandizement is the controlling principle. The question, "how will this affect my interest?" decides the course to be pursued. The form of the action may be correct, while the principle is deficient. One may feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, or contribute to charitable objects, and still be entirely under the influence of selfishness. A *holy motive* is essential to the performance of a *holy act*. The most imposing duties lose their value, when it is discovered that they were performed from a spirit of self-righteousness. Now the Christian is constrained by the love of Christ; he aims at the glory of God. He keeps his heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. But the impenitent sinner never performs a good action from right motives. The stream cannot rise higher than its

fountain ; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit ; good thoughts cannot proceed out of the evil treasures of an unrenewed heart. *Without faith, a new nature, it is impossible to please God.* Actions apparently similar may be performed by the righteous and the wicked, but in the sight of God they are as dissimilar as the opposite kingdoms of light and darkness. There is an essential difference in all these respects, which will lay the foundation of an eternal separation. We might mention, also, a difference in the sources of joy and sorrow, the influence exerted, and in other things ; but the points already presented sufficiently establish the *reality* and radical nature of the difference between the righteous and the wicked.

II. The text not only assumes the fact of a difference, but suggests the inquiry, To what is it to be referred ?—*Who maketh thee to differ from another ?* An inquiry of vital importance in investigating the character of the Christian's hope.

Is the moral distinction between men to be referred to the cultivation of a common principle of grace in the heart ? This is affirmed by many. Some texts of Scripture are quoted in proof. 1 Cor. xi. 7. *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* This, it is said, justifies the inference that every man has the Spirit of grace for the purpose of profiting in religion—or that the dispensation of the Spirit is given to all. The meaning of the apostle is easily ascertained from the context. He is speaking of gifts and the object for which they were conferred. A full enumeration of these gifts is found in the verses immediately following this. These were bestowed for the benefit of the whole body of the Church, and not to create distinctions, or flatter vanity.—*The diversities of operations, and manifestation of the Spirit,* refer, without doubt, to these gifts, and not to what is termed ordinary grace.—The word manifestation means evidence ; the gifts were a proof of the operation or power of the Spirit.—These were given to promote usefulness.—This is more distinctly taught in the 14th Chap. of this Epist. v. 3. *That the Church may receive edifying.* v. 12. *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church.* So that this text has no direct reference to common or special grace.

Another text quoted is John, i. 9. *That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* This, it is said, teaches that all men have the light if they are willing to improve it. It is doubtless true that all men have light enough to condemn them, if they reject the gospel. But the Evangelist is speaking simply of Christ as the *true light*, the Sun of righteousness.—The truths of his gospel are rays emanating from that Sun. But no one will say these have reached alike all mankind.

It is also said, that the *accountableness of man* supposes the existence of a principle of common grace, which, by cultivation, may lead to newness of life. But does the possession of a principle of common grace constitute man a free agent ? By *free* agency is meant the power of choice or aversion without constraint. By *moral* agency is meant a basis of character susceptible of obligation. If a principle of common grace is this basis, then fallen spirits are not moral agents ; then the moment a sinner sinks to perdition he ceases to be one, of course cannot be a proper subject of punishment. The possession of a rational soul, with sufficient light, and net grace, constitutes accountability. " A depraved disposition does not destroy

or weaken the basis of moral obligation, nor does a holy heart go in to constitute or complete it. If it did, a holy disposition would be that in the creature on which rests the obligation to be holy; and where the disposition is wanting, there could be no obligation, of course no sin." "Men have the same natural powers to love Christ, as to hate him; to believe as to disbelieve; and this it is which constitutes their accountableness."

Do men possess by nature a seed of grace, which, with proper cultivation will ripen into holiness; and does the spirit of Christ in conversion do nothing more than co-operate with this latent principle? If so, then there is no new creation in the work of conversion; if so, all men would certainly renew their own hearts, or obtain the co-operation of the Spirit, when threatened with death; but then, too late, they find themselves possessed of no such disposition. But what is the testimony of Scripture as to the existence of any such principle in the natural heart. Rom. iii. 9. 19. Gen. vi. 5. *Every imagination, only evil.* Gal. iii. 22. *The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* That which is born of the flesh is flesh; nor can it be made to possess a single spiritual and holy attribute.

The question returns, to what is the difference between the righteous and the wicked to be referred? To any inherent efficacy in the means of grace? No; if the means possessed any converting power, then all who enjoy them would be converted. But this is not the fact. To some they prove a savor of death unto death, to others of life unto life. The gospel, the most powerful instrument, often fails.—*The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* The means of grace are of great importance to impart light to the understanding and conscience, to produce conviction, to induce good habits, and restrain from evil, but they possess no inherent efficacy to change the heart.

That power is exerted by the Spirit of God alone. Let me refer you to the proper source of evidence—the Scriptures of truth. Both gifts and grace are ascribed to the same Author. 1 Cor. xii. 4. 6. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.* xv. 10. Says Paul, *By the grace of God I am what I am.* Here is no intimation of a principle resident in his heart which had been cultivated. Rom. ix. 16. *So it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.* Here the power is denied to man and ascribed to God. Eph. i. 9. *That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the effectual working of his power.* ii. 3—5. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,—by grace ye are saved.* In these verses the natural character of man is drawn in unequivocal lines; *children of wrath, dead in sins.* If these terms do not express utter destitution of holiness, there is no power in language. The Author of a saving change is also given with equal explicitness and strength of lan-

guage. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Tim. i. 12, 13, 14. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* The apostle has here given us his own views in regard to himself; and to what source his conversion was to be referred. Tit. iii. 5, 6. *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior.* John i. 12, 13. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Here the power of faith and the privilege of adoption are ascribed to God, while every other source of influence is declared to be inadequate. Zech. iv. 6. *Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Such is the unequivocal and strong language of the Bible on this great point of Christian doctrine. Were further proof necessary, we might appeal to the *experience of Christians*. Were we to inquire of all who are taught of God, who give evidence of a broken and contrite spirit, whether they first sought the Lord, and of themselves returned to him, with united voice they would answer, "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*" If we had been left to ourselves, we had now been wanderers from the fold of Christ; the world had still been our portion and object of pursuit. To grace, rich grace we owe our recovery and deliverance." The *prayers* of Christians are in unison with this language. The same Spirit which indited the testimony we have adduced, which awakened, enlightened, and subdued the believer, and led him to Jesus, teaches him to pray—and in every prayer he acknowledges God as *the sole Author* of spiritual life. When, therefore, the question in the text is proposed, the Christian, with swimming eyes and grateful heart exclaims, "Who am I, or what is my father's house, that I should find favor of the Lord?" "Not for our duties or deserts, did we this grace receive."

This is eminently a practical subject, and should be thus improved.

1. We see, that the law of faith excludes all boasting. It is the very design of the gospel to stain the pride of human nature and nail it to the cross. Man is exceedingly prone to glory in himself. The wise man glories in his wisdom, the mighty man in his might, and the rich man in his riches; but it is not only evidence of weakness and depravity, but contrary to the spirit and commands of the gospel. Boasting is wholly excluded from the plan of salvation through Christ. *To him that worketh*, or hopes to be saved by his deeds, *is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt; But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* Since all have sinned and come short

of the glory of God, those who are saved are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God claims, and should receive, all the glory of our salvation. Every part of the plan of sovereign grace is designedly so arranged by the great Author of it, *that no flesh should glory in his presence.* God was angry with Herod for not giving him the glory of his eloquence, and smote him that he died; how much more will he be offended, if we take to ourselves the glory of our conversion, if we rob him of the honor of his precious grace by which we become partakers of the divine nature. If God is jealous of the glory of a natural gift, will he not frown upon an attempt to deprive him of the glory of so high an endowment as saving grace? The true spirit of the gospel will lead us to adopt the language of the apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. What infinite cause of gratitude has every Christian! Why was he made to differ from another? Because his sins were less aggravated, or his heart less depraved? Neither of these. *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight,* is the only answer that can be given. We need not speak of the heathen, sitting in darkness, perishing in deepest wretchedness, to excite our gratitude—whichever way we turn, we behold multitudes living without God, neglecting the great salvation, spiritually blind and destitute. Who hath made us to differ? Are we by nature better than they? No, in nowise. If our eyes have been opened, if we have been convinced of sin, if our feet have been turned to God's testimonies, it is all owing to sovereign grace. What return shall we make for such infinite condescension and mercy? Can we withhold ourselves or any thing we possess from Him, who loved us with an everlasting love? What have we that we did not receive? Shall we not, then, dedicate ourselves anew, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service?

3. This subject illustrates the sinner's entire dependence on God for salvation. If he is ever made to differ from the poor outcast who offends with a high hand and perishes in his sins, God must cause the difference; if he ever becomes willing to renounce his evil ways and embrace the gospel, it will be in the day of God's power—if he ever turns to the Lord, it is God that will turn him. He is so depraved, his heart is so fully set in him to do evil, that he will never repent, or come to Christ, till drawn by sovereign grace. There is nothing, however, between him and salvation but his own wickedness. His love to sin is so great, that neither the terrors of hell nor the joys of heaven can induce him to renounce it. He will not come to Christ that he may have life. While he promises future amendment, and dreams of a more favorable opportunity, the great adversary is enthroned in his heart, conscience is losing its tenderness, and deeper darkness settling upon his prospects; he becomes more presumptuous; cries peace and safety, while destruction is bursting upon him.—He is the slave of sin, led captive by Satan: there is no hope of such an one but in sovereign mercy: you cannot move him: if God interpose not, he is dead. And O, who can tell, if he shall ever be savingly touched by that Power who "*quickeneth whom he will;*" but whose wrath the sinner is daily and hourly provoking?

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SERMON LXXIX.

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GOD ENTITLED TO OUR OBEDIENCE.

Exod. v. 2.—*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?*

THIS impious question was uttered by that haughty monarch, who, after cruelly enslaving the people of God, refused to release them at his command. The interrogation is equivalent to the boldest assertion, that the Lord is not a Being of such greatness and excellency as to deserve the obedience of man. At least the king of Egypt wished to excuse himself; and he spoke the heart of every sinner. In thus confidently addressing Moses, he doubtless expected to awe him into silence; and so to escape any decisive reply. But that omnipotent Being, whose authority was disputed, came forth in terrible majesty, and took the answer upon himself. Pharaoh trembled at the plagues, which manifested a power infinitely superior to his own; and so long as the vindictive hand of God was upon him, he felt himself to be a creature. But not repenting of his impiety, while he shuddered at its punishment, he was left to that presumption which issued in his ruin.

Although comparatively few are so bold as to repeat the question, which God answered in so awful a manner, yet the sentiment which it avows is continually echoed by the conduct of sinners. Indeed, all sin proclaims the principle, that there is no God worthy to be obeyed. Else why is he ever disobeyed? But impenitent sinners would justify themselves in disobedience. Hence we read, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." This sentiment has been cherished in every past generation. But the fool of modern times advances boldly beyond his more timid predecessors; and what they dared to think, he dares to speak. In almost all nations now called Christian, there are those who not only refuse to obey the commands of God, but make sport of his perfections and deny his being. Sin is in itself a principle of atheism, and these refiners in iniquity carry it through. "No God" is the language of their hearts, and the principle of their daily practice; and with

dreadful consistency, some have registered it as a maxim of their philosophy. But professed atheists only display the tendency of that sinful nature, which is common to us all. "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?*" is the practical question of *all* who do not live, by evangelical faith, that life which God requires, and which is the only acceptable acknowledgment of his being and perfections. This question I shall attempt to answer by a general exhibition of *the divine claims to our obedience.*

In the *first* place, then, we ought to obey God, *because he is the benevolent Creator of the universe.* If he had done nothing to reveal himself, we could have had no knowledge of his character and existence. "No man hath seen God at any time." It belongs to him alone to commune directly with himself, and to behold without a glass his own perfections. It is, however, the nature of infinite goodness, to reveal, to communicate, and glorify itself. It was the eternal purpose of God to make himself known to intelligent creatures, endued with capacities to obey and enjoy him. This most glorious design he began to execute, with consummate wisdom, in the work of creation. And in view of his creation, it would seem as though every intelligent man would devoutly exclaim,

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! thine this universal frame.
Thus wondrous fair, thyself how wondrous then!"

But there is in man a strange propensity to overlook God in the very things by which he invites our notice. We behold his works with a kind of habitual atheism; we call them the works of nature; and in the very effects we lose sight of the Cause. To realize the manifestation of Deity which there is in creation, we must detach our thoughts from the established order of things, and imagine ourselves the spectators of their first production by divine power. Suppose this moment the beginning of time. Conceive the earth just coming forth, a mighty mass without form and void, and darkness brooding upon the face of the deep. Listen to the creative voice, *Let there be light*, and see it instantly break forth to enlighten the unfinished world. Behold the waters gathering into seas and oceans, the earth consolidating, and the grass, herbage, and trees rising in beauty upon its surface. Behold the unnumbered animals, as they come into existence, all instinctively choosing their appointed elements; some the water, some the air, some the earth. Mark the sun and the moon taking their appointed stations in the heavens. Survey the countless stars arranging themselves at suitable distances in the immensity of space, where the earth itself with all its lands and waters is but a point. See the whole system of creation advancing into order by de-

grees, till every part becomes complete, and, at the all-commanding word, behold, at length, the vast machinery begin to move. Not a single plant interferes with its neighbor—no discordant note interrupts the harmony of the spheres. Well might the great Creator look with pleasure on his works, and pronounce them *good*. But the most distinguished and most important creature is yet to be produced. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” To give greater distinction to the nature of man, the mode of divine operation is now changed. Things in general were brought into existence by a word. God said, let them be, and they were. But when *man* was to be produced, the Almighty for the first time put forth his forming *hand*, and with his *own breath* inspired that rational life, which was to bear his image. “The Lord formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And God blessed them, and said unto them, have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Thus all things in earth, air, and ocean were for the use of man, and the chief end of man was to glorify and enjoy his Maker. And could any thing ever cancel the obligations thus conferred upon man by his bountiful Creator?

Secondly; We are bound to obey God, *because he is the constant Preserver of the creatures of his power*. We are apt to think that little of the divine energy is necessary to keep the world in being after its first creation. But we ought to remember, that there is no sufficiency in created existence to continue itself. Accordingly, when the Psalmist takes a survey of the creatures of God, he devoutly acknowledges their unremitting and entire dependence. “These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou gavest them they gather. Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.” It requires, every moment, the same omnipotence to preserve the universe which was displayed in producing it. And by proper attention we shall find that the perfections of God shine to more advantage in preservation, than in creation. It is by no means so difficult to make an advance, as it is to support it. After any great exertion, finite beings need rest, and whatever requires unremitting energy is to them attended with insuperable difficulty. Were it not for the continued exercise of divine power in preserving the universe, we might have some reason to conclude, that *his* Maker had exhausted himself in its creation. But God is now rising before his creatures every moment, and ever multiplying the proofs of his infinite greatness. At this late period of the world, every century, every day, every instant of past time is a distinct evidence that the Creator’s re-

sources are altogether inexhaustible ; that all possibilities are equally easy with him ; and that he is infinitely able to carry into complete effect that stupendous plan of the universe, which none but himself could devise and put in operation. Infinitely above all finite comprehension must he be, who for thousands of years sustains the vast system of worlds, without being in the least degree burthened by the weighty charge. And, when we reflect upon the innumerable multitudes of intelligent beings, all depending for support upon the kind Father of their spirits, we have convincing evidence that there is One in existence, whom giving doth not impoverish, nor withholding make rich ; and who accounts it more blessed to give than to receive. If then the Creator of the universe is entitled to obedience, he has still higher claims when contemplated as the faithful and Almighty Preserver.

But, *thirdly*, we are under yet greater obligations to obey God, *because he is the perfect Governor of the universe*. We are wisely placed under a law, which at once declares the true end of our existence, and our duty to pursue it invariably. There is in the nature of an intelligent mind a sense of obligation, giving the sanction of conscience to the commands of God. These are so benevolent in their tendency, that he who breaks them strikes at the root of his own best happiness. To obey God is to participate in his blessedness. But mere laws, whether divine or human, are but feeble cords. Nothing but the universal influence of the supreme Governor can so order events, as to fulfil his wise and eternal purposes. The effectual direction of the great first Cause is necessary every moment so to produce, to arrange, and control the operations of second causes, as that the universe shall answer the end of its creation. It is not in the seasons to cause their own revolutions ; it is not in the earth to continue itself in its appointed sphere ; it is not in the stars to regulate their courses ; “ the way of man is not in himself,—it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

Both the natural and moral worlds depend as entirely upon God for their daily direction, as for their first and constant existence. That which is dependent for its being can never become independent in any of its movements ; and nothing can create itself, or spring into existence without a cause. We may, also, be sure that God will not suffer any thing to have place under his wise dominion, but what he designs to render conducive to the best good of his kingdom. In doing otherwise he would deny himself. Let it not be imagined, from the sin and misery which have prevailed in the world, that God has forgotten to regulate his own affairs, or descended from the throne of universal government. Let us not suppose that chance has interfered with his benevolent purposes, or that Satan has wrested from his hands the sceptre and the reins. Let us not indulge the thought, that even sin itself has broken in upon the

divine system by surprise, and stolen an influence which God could not prevent. This is to make the sinner omnipotent and God an impotent, disappointed Being, attacked and overcome in an unguarded hour, or else conquered in his full strength and vigilance. This would plunge us into the abyss of atheism. Let us rather believe, as the Bible teaches, that "the Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil;" and that moral as well as natural evil will be made the instrument of good in his hand, who can accomplish his gracious purposes by the most unpromising means, and bring glory to himself and advantage to the universe from the very things which seem to threaten the destruction of both. It displays only a false regard to the honor of God, to deny his agency where he himself directly asserts it, and calls us to acknowledge it with submission and confidence. If evil has come into the world without any other superintendency than that of chance, we have reason to tremble, lest it should prove an eternal disadvantage to God's kingdom. But, if the wisest, purest, and best of beings has had the supreme control of all events, we may be certain that its existence will in some way or other be made a benefit to the universe, notwithstanding its dreadful tendency to the contrary, and notwithstanding the sinner designs only evil, and is therefore verily guilty. He, who first caused light to shine out of darkness, will also bring good out of evil; making even the wrath of man to praise him, and wisely restraining the remainder thereof; so that nothing shall take place from the beginning to the end of time, but what shall, on the whole, be made to promote the best good of his kingdom. Thus the government of God is in the strictest sense perfect, and most amply entitles him to universal obedience.

Fourthly; We are obligated in the highest degree to obey God, *because he is the merciful Redeemer of sinners.* To save from eternal death guilty creatures, not only without injury, but with real advantage to that broken law which condemns them, and that divine authority, which they have treated with contempt; to change their rebellious hearts and bring them to repentance and cheerful obedience, to forgive their sins, without affording the least countenance to sinners, and finally to introduce them into the kingdom of heaven in a way glorious to the justice, holiness, and majesty of Him who sits upon the throne, is a work which displays the all-sufficiency of God, unspeakably more than the creation, preservation, and government of the whole universe. In the salvation of sinners there were obstacles to be surmounted of a very peculiar nature. How shall the righteous Enemy of sin take the part of its miserable subjects? How shall he, who has said, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," maintain his consistency, and yet reverse the sentence of death? How shall the enemies of God be admitted to his gracious presence? How shall those, who have opposed themselves to his perfections and government, be brought to harmonize with them, and be qualified to enjoy the bliss of

heaven? If the conduct of God himself had not given the answer to these inquiries, they would have remained unanswerable for ever. The redemption of men is so glorious a work, that it would eclipse all the other operations of Deity, did it not confer new lustre upon them, as the wisest and best preparation for this matchless display of divine glory. It now appears, that God was determined, "before the foundation of the world," to make manifest his infinite perfections to the best possible advantage in the great work of redemption. With this gracious intention he created the world, and has ever since continued it in being under his wise government; overruling all its events, even the most dark and dreadful, from the fall of man to the crucifixion of Christ, in such a manner as to secure the best opportunity of glorifying himself in the salvation of the lost. Here the darkness begins to be dispersed, which, to the eye of man, had so long enveloped the general scope of Providence. The human mind has been in much perplexity concerning the mysterious course of divine government; and the question has been repeated in every age, Why is the world so full of sin and misery, if its supreme Governor is infinitely powerful, wise, and good? On this formidable objection infidelity has founded its system, and atheism erected its fortress. But the difficulty is removed, the objection is taken away by the glorious Redeemer; and both the infidel and atheist are left without refuge. It was needful, that there should be clouds for the Sun of righteousness to dissipate, or he could never appear in his all-conquering and resplendent glory. As it is the established order in the natural system for the night to precede the day, so it is in the moral system for darkness to go before light. There must have been first a sinful, ruined world, which needed salvation, before God could possibly display his eternal mercy in its undeserved redemption. If man had been kept from falling, woful as his fall was, God could not have glorified himself in his recovery, pardon, and salvation. The most illustrious display of unbounded goodness depended upon that sovereign disposal of a righteous God, under which sin and misery have been permitted to take place. For pardon could be offered and mercy displayed to none but sinners. It was for God to determine whether sin should be permitted to enter Paradise or not. He was infinitely able to prevent it. He could have kept the tempter at an eternal distance from our first parents, or he could have strengthened them in the moment of temptation, and disappointed the adversary. But he thought it better, on the whole, that the temptation should be suffered to prevail. Though Satan meant it for evil, yet God in his holy providence meant it for good; intending to secure more glory in man's recovery, than it would have been to have kept him from falling. While, therefore, we are supremely concerned to hate sin as God hates it, let us adore the infinite wisdom of his sove-

reignty in so ordering the train of events as to display most fully his opposition to sin by his just treatment of it, his infinite power over it, and his unabated good-will and compassion to its miserable subjects.

To behold the divine character in its real glory is the most consummate blessedness of intelligent beings. That plan of operations, therefore, by which God can most fully display himself, is unspeakably the most perfect. Infinite Wisdom has adopted it, and its full accomplishment is rapidly advancing. The increase of happiness, which the universe is to receive from the redemption and salvation of sinners, is evinced by the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance: and if the angels thus rejoice, what must be the blessedness of the redeemed themselves, when safely arrived in glory? How does the mariner, who has seen the heavens gathering blackness over him, and the ocean beneath swelling into mountains, and ready to overwhelm him—how does *he* enjoy the change, when the winds are hushed, and the sun looks forth without a cloud. What, then, must be the sensations of one, who, after feeling the guilt of sin, and danger of eternal wrath, finds himself in heaven, at the right hand of God, where sin and sorrow never enter?

Let it not be objected against the work of redemption, that all do not partake in its benefits. The atonement is sufficient for all, and the free offer of salvation is universal. And if God in a sovereign manner graciously inclines some to accept his mercy, and yet leaves others to perish in their obstinacy, he wrongs no man. The destruction of impenitent sinners is, indeed, a great, but a deserved evil; and *we* are very unsuitable judges, whether it may not finally be necessary for the general good. But, when we are told that all will not be saved, we may be *certain* it is not best that all should be. For infinite power, wisdom, and goodness can make no mistake. It appears also highly reasonable that the ill-desert of sin should be thus strikingly manifested to the universe, in the punishment of the incorrigible sinner, as well as in the sufferings of the Savior. God thus reveals himself in the work of redemption, as a just God and a Savior, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet by no means clearing the guilty and impenitent.

From this general view of the character and works of God, we infer, in the first place, the greatness of our obligations to love and obey him with all the heart. If God is to be regarded at all, he is to be regarded supremely. If he deserves any place in our affections, he merits the first place. To give him any other than our supreme love is utterly impossible. We love him as God, or we do not love him at all. We give him the throne, or we wholly dethrone him in our souls. To render him a grudging homage from the natural principle of self-preservation, is no acknowledgment of his glorious perfections, nor any compliance with our high

obligations. We must therefore give him the throne of our hearts and the service of our lives.

It may be inferred, in the second place, from the infinite excellency of the divine character, that to be destitute of the love of God is to possess a heart entirely depraved. Whatever is worthy of love in moral beings is derived from the Source of all moral excellence. The goodness of creatures is but an emanation of the Divine goodness. Those, therefore, can have no true regard to real moral excellence, who do not love it in God. Their love to men must be of a partial and interested nature. It is generally admitted that love to God constitutes essentially a good man. But how many there are who call themselves good, and yet seem to live year after year without God in the world. Do such persons realize, that not to love God and enjoy communion with him, is to be without religion? Do they lay it suitably to heart, that, if they had any holy affections, they would find an object of delight in God? Do they consider, that nothing but entire depravity can account for their want of love to the supreme Excellency? A conviction of this humiliating truth should now alarm them. They should see themselves to be unworthy of any enjoyment, while unable to find it in God, the Source of all blessedness.

Let me then exhort the impenitent; *Be ye reconciled to God.* He has graciously set on foot a plan of reconciliation through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ; offering pardon and blessedness to all who will renounce their opposition and become his friends. There is every possible motive to immediate compliance with this overture. We must either comply, or, by obstinately rejecting it, widen the distance between God and ourselves, and render it eternal. God cannot make a more benevolent offer. He invites us to become his friends, and upon that condition engages to befriend us throughout eternity. He opens before us all the sources of pleasure which heaven contains, and urges us to take freely. He promises as large a share of blessedness to every one of his friends as their capacity will admit. Nor is this all; he engages to enlarge their powers of enjoyment with a perpetual increase. Who can imagine to what heights of blessedness man may be raised by that Almighty Being, who created worlds and upholds them in existence? All that God can do to make us happy, will certainly be done, if we obey him. But, on the contrary, if we continue disobedient, all his perfections are of necessity arrayed against us. God is no neutral character, and he acknowledges no neutrality in any other being. Those who are not his friends he ranks among his enemies, and with them he fixes their eternal portion. His glory is displayed by the punishment of his enemies, as well as by the happiness of his friends. And how totally beyond conception must be the wretchedness of those on whom God shall

pour out his wrath, without mixture and without end. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was but a faint representation of that eternal destruction which awaits the impenitent. To be imprisoned for ever among the enemies of God and of universal being, where no tear is shed in compassion for the general misery, where enmity is the reigning temper, and mutual vexation the only employment—this alone is dreadful enough; but to have the omnipotent God for your eternal enemy—who can think of it without horror? Who, then, that hears me will remain another moment at enmity with Him.—breathing out hatred against his holy sovereignty? That moment may be fatal. “*Now, then—as though God did beseech you by us—we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*”

SERMON LXXX.

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FATAL HINDRANCE TO PRAYER.

Ps. LXVI. 18.—*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

THERE is no subject on which the Prophets and Apostles speak with more earnestness and decision, than on *the necessity of holiness*. They inform us that God, who is himself infinitely holy, has given us a law, requiring every thing that is virtuous and pure, and forbidding every thing sinful; and that he will, by the most unequivocal acts of his government, show his love of the one, and his hatred of the other. And when they come to treat of the infinite mercy of God in redemption, of the grace which superabounds where sin hath abounded, they still set forth the holiness of God, and the necessity of holiness in man. They teach, that although God will save *sinner*s, he will give no encouragement to *sin*; that the whole work of redemption is intended to promote moral purity,—to establish a kingdom of holiness. Such, evidently, is the plan of Divine Wisdom in this work, that the greater the number and the guilt of those who are saved, the more fully will the evil of sin be exposed, and the more illustriously will divine purity be displayed.

The sentiment, *that God is holy and cannot look upon sin*, was deeply impressed upon the mind of David. It was a truth familiar to his thoughts, that, although God was so much inclined to hear prayer, and to grant the desires of all who call upon him, he would have no favorable intercourse

with those who lived in sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." If I look upon sin with desire,—if I love it,—if I allow myself to commit it,—if I am reluctant to part with it,—a holy God will be displeased, and will have no friendly communication with me; and the prayers which I may offer up will be an abomination in his sight.

That God will not hear the prayer of those who regard iniquity in their hearts, is made very evident from the infallible instructions of holy writ. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." "The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." These texts, and various others which might be quoted, plainly teach, that God cannot show such favor to those who live in sin, as to hear their prayers; that this token of his kindness and complacency can be granted to those only who forsake sin, and live in holy obedience. How tremendous was the declaration of God to the wicked Israelites in the time of Isaiah. After telling them, that their sacrifices, and their days of devotion, and all their outward observances were loathsome to him, he adds, "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." He then proceeds to tell them what they must do to be heard and accepted: "Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." The same is taught in the New Testament. I shall cite only one passage; "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not," (that is, for allowed sin,) "then have we confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight." Here the Apostle represents it as a well known and certain truth, that God's hearing prayer was a proof of his approbation, and that none could enjoy this who did not keep his commands.

The same truth may be deduced from a consideration of the known *attributes of God*. It would be manifestly inconsistent with our best views of the infinite *benevolence and wisdom* of God, to suppose that he will show such favor to unrepenting sinners, as to hear their prayers. Being infinitely benevolent, he desires and seeks the happiness of intelligent creatures. In the exercise of his infinite wisdom, he determines, that the only way to promote their happiness permanently, and in the highest degree, is, to maintain a *moral government*. In this government there must be *law*. Those who obey, must receive marks of divine favor; and those who disobey, marks of divine displeasure. The very nature of law implies this. Now can it be, that God, who possesses such a character, and has published such a law, will hear the prayers of those who regard iniquity in their hearts, and thus bestow upon them

the same marks of approbation, as upon the obedient? Should he do this, he would utterly destroy the distinction between the obedient and the disobedient, and would in this way subvert those principles of moral government which his infinite wisdom and goodness have established.

There is another way of coming to the same conclusion. God cannot approve of that which is opposite to his infinite benevolence; and he cannot show approbation, when he feels disapprobation. But if he should hear the prayers of the impenitent, he would show approbation of that temper of mind which is directly opposite to his benevolence, and which therefore he must for ever disapprove and condemn.

It might also be made to appear, that other attributes of God forbid the expectation that he will hear those who regard iniquity in their hearts. His *justice* forbids this; as it requires that men should be treated according to their character. His *truth* forbids it; because he has expressly declared that he will not hear impenitent sinners. In a word; all his perfections must prevent him from hearing the prayers of those who indulge the love of sin.

The doctrine which I have thus briefly established, is essential to the Christian religion, and has a direct bearing upon various subjects of high practical importance.

In the **FIRST** place, it exposes, in clear daylight, *the falsity of every scheme of religion which stands in opposition to the divine law, or in any way detracts from its authority and influence.* Against such a scheme, in every form and degree, the doctrine contained in our text, and indeed the whole Gospel, sets itself in array. I cannot enlarge on this particular view of the subject; and must content myself with a few suggestions addressed directly to the conscience.

If, then, there is any one, whether older or younger, who encourages himself in disobedience to God, because he hopes for pardon;—any one, who is less impressed with the authority of the divine law, because Christ died to redeem us from its curse;—any one, who can live quietly in the neglect of duty, because he thinks he has believed in Christ; finally, if there is any one, whose confidence in divine grace renders him less grieved and distressed with the evils of his own heart and life, and less desirous of becoming holy;—let such a one know, that, however highly he may think of himself, God looks upon him with an awful frown, and will not hear his prayers. That very grace of Christ, which he makes the foundation of his hopes, stands against him; charges him with a total opposition to its very nature and design, and threatens him with a loss of all its blessings. If there is one instance of criminality more aggravated and more abhorrent to the mind of God, than any other; it is that of the man who turns the grace of God into licentiousness; who grows quiet and bold in sin, because he knows that Christ can forgive.

SECONDLY; Our doctrine is important in relation to *Christians, and may assist them in accounting for the fact, that their prayers are so seldom heard and answered.* The prayers, brethren, which we have offered to God, cannot be enumerated. We have often prayed that he would enlighten our minds; that he would make us holy, harmless, and undefiled, cause all the fruits of the Spirit to abound in us. We have prayed too for the growing holiness and usefulness of Christians; for the conversion of sinners; for the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon our churches, and our literary and religious institutions; and for the universal spread of the Gospel. Such prayers for ourselves and for others we have offered up hundreds, and perhaps thousands of times; and have offered them up to that God who *heareth prayer.* And yet, where is the answer to our prayers? Where is that growth in knowledge and grace,—that fruitfulness in good works,—that Christian humility and love, and that lustre of holiness, for which we have prayed? Where is that abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit,—and that general conversion of sinners,—that success of Christ's ministers, and that increase of his church, for which we have so frequently besought the Lord? Is not here something very strange?—God has promised to hear prayer;—the prayers of Christians constantly ascend to him for spiritual blessings;—and yet few of those blessings are bestowed! How shall we account for it, that, after we have been praying from day to day, and from year to year, that our minds might be “light in the Lord,” they are still so dark?—and that after we have been praying for perfect conformity to Christ, we are still so unlike him?—and that after we have presented so many supplications for the blessings of Heaven upon others, so few of those blessings are granted? Has God ceased to be gracious? Has he forgotten his promises? Is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? No, brethren; the reason is not to be found in God, but in ourselves. We are chargeable with regarding iniquity in our hearts; we are deficient in our obedience to the divine law. This is the reason, and the only reason, why God does not hear our prayers.—And, my brethren, is not this a *sufficient* reason? Can we suppose that God will be *partial* to us, because we are his children?—that he will have such a *fondness*, as will lead him to indulge *us* in that which he forbids to *others*? The Scriptures teach, that if there is any thing which excites the displeasure of God more than all things else, it is the sin which he sees in his own children. If we are his children, we have been sanctified, and made the temple of God through the Holy Ghost. And how must it displease God, to see us defiling his temple! What an insufferable offence must it be to his infinite goodness, that, after he has done so much to redeem us from iniquity and make us holy, we should ungratefully forget his goodness, and still cleave to that very iniquity, from which he has begun to deliver us!—If God looks with abhorrence upon sin in the wicked

world ; he looks upon it with double abhorrence, when found in *us*, if we are indeed his children. Unrenewed sinners do indeed sin against *conscience*. But do not *we* sin against a *clearer* conscience? *They* sin against the light which shines around them. But *we* sin against light which shines within us. *They* violate strong obligations ; but *we stronger*. *They* have merely heard the name of Christ, and been invited to partake of his blessings. But *we* have seen his glory, and received of his fulness, and enjoyed fellowship with him in prayer, and at his table ; and have had our names written in heaven. Now for us, in such circumstances, to regard iniquity in our hearts, is an evil of the highest aggravation. And God will feel and manifest the highest displeasure against it. And let me freely ask, my brethren, whether God has not already manifested his displeasure, in the dreadful fact that he has not heard our prayers? When we consider how many times we have made supplications to God for spiritual blessings, and then look on ourselves and see how we are dying for want of them ; do we not recognise the tokens of divine displeasure? Could there be a more certain or more appalling proof of God's anger against us, than his saying ;—" When ye multiply your prayers, I will not hear." This tremendous evil is the consequence of our regarding iniquity in our hearts.

Christian brethren, this is a serious subject. Let us not pass over it lightly. Let each one for himself faithfully inquire,—*What is the particular sin, which causes the divine displeasure against me, and hinders my prayers from being heard?* And if we would pursue this inquiry to any good purpose, let us fix our eye upon the high standard of duty exhibited in the Holy Scriptures, and make that the rule of our judgment. If we find that we allow ourselves to neglect any thing enjoined in the word of God ; or that we do any thing there forbidden ; or that we give entertainment in our hearts to any dispositions or feelings there condemned ; we shall see at once what the barrier is, which separates us from God. Let us then seriously consider the whole range of duties enjoined upon us in the Scriptures respecting God, and our fellow-creatures, and ourselves ; and by faithful self-examination determine, whether we do habitually and diligently perform these various duties.

Our attention to this subject may be rendered more profitable, if we will examine ourselves in regard to a class of duties and sins which are considered with less frequency, and are more likely to pass unnoticed ; which are so much under the veil of retirement and privacy, that our consciences are less apt to be affected by them, than by other duties and sins which are more exposed to public view. I speak now of the hidden motives which govern us in those actions, which are externally right. I speak of those thoughts and feelings, which are seen only by the eye of God. I speak of those more humble, private duties, which occur every day and every hour ; those duties which require the greatest victory over

the corrupt affections of the heart,—the greatest watchfulness, and patience, and meekness. The neglect of any of these duties, however retired from public view,—indulgence in any of these sins, though ever so small in the judgment of the world, may be highly offensive to God; and it may be a latent poison, which will spread through our whole spiritual frame.

As what I have now hinted at is specially important, I shall turn your thoughts to a few examples.

It is the requisition of the sacred Scriptures, that we should be governed in our conduct by *love to God and love to man*. Suppose now, that, in all our actions, even when we show the greatest respect for God, and the greatest benevolence to man, we still have in our hearts an ultimate reference to *ourselves*; and instead of seeking the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and the honor of God, do in reality make our own interest the grand object of pursuit. Is not this regarding iniquity in our hearts? Is not supreme self-love the very essence of sin? And while this remains unsubdued within us, will not God look upon us with abhorrence, and turn away his ear from our prayers?

Again; if we receive an injury from others, God requires us from the heart to forgive them, to wish them well, and to overcome evil with good. In doubtful cases, he requires us to avoid evil thoughts and suspicions, and to possess that love which hopeth all things. Suppose now, that when we receive any injury, we put the worst construction possible upon it; that we suffer malignant passion to gain the ascendancy; that we perpetually dwell upon the injury, whether real or imaginary, so that all kind feeling towards those who have offended us is destroyed, and dark, resentful, malicious thoughts occupy our breast. Suppose, moreover, that we go about as tale-bearers, and circulate injurious reports, true or false, for the purpose of gratifying our resentment, and blackening a character which has become the object of our dislike. Is not this iniquity? Is there any thing more opposite to the mind of Christ—any thing more opposite to his example—than such a temper and conduct as this? And if we indulge it, can we be so presumptuous as to think that God will hear our prayers?

If we have injured or offended others, our Lord requires us to make ample confession and reparation. If any of our fellow Christians have aught against us, it is our *first* duty to go and be reconciled to them. The neglect of this is a sin, which will deprive us of the happiness of communion with God. There are some relative duties expressly enjoined in the Scriptures, which Christians are apt to overlook; particularly the more appropriate duties of parents and children, husbands and wives. God is as much in earnest in those commands which prescribe our conduct in these relations, as in those which require us to love and worship Him. And if we venture, in any respect or degree, to neglect

these relative and domestic duties, which are thus divinely appointed ; we regard iniquity in our hearts, and incur the displeasure of the Almighty.

Once more : We are required not to think of ourselves above what we ought to think ; not to seek great things for ourselves ; but to be meek and lowly in heart, and to be content that our names should be unknown, if the name of our blessed Lord may be honored. Suppose now, that we entertain high thoughts of ourselves ; that we exalt ourselves above others, and complain, if we are not treated with just so much respect and honor ; that we aspire after GREATNESS instead of *goodness* ; that we seek the gratification of ourselves, instead of the welfare of others ; and care for our own things, not for the things of Christ. Is not such a state of mind highly offensive to God ? Can he take pleasure in us, while we cherish it ?

Let us then, brethren, examine ourselves with incessant care. For sin is a deceitful, subtle thing. It has ten thousand arts ; and all those arts are employed to hide it from our view. Under that dark veil which covers our hearts, we may perhaps find that abomination, which has caused our darkness and poverty, and rendered our prayers unavailing. God Almighty *search us, and know our hearts, and try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us ; and lead us in the way everlasting.* And may we soon be able to say, we do not regard iniquity in our hearts ; the grace of God has eradicated the love of sin. *And now we know that whatsoever we ask we shall receive, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.*

THIRDLY ; Impenitent sinners may learn from this subject, *why God does not hear their prayers.* On this point, those who are disposed to give some attention to religion, especially those who are solicitous for their eternal happiness, often feel distressing difficulties. They are unable to account for it, that, after they have offered up so many prayers, they are not relieved from trouble, and comforted with the tokens of divine forgiveness. Sometimes they ascribe this to the want of stronger excitement of feeling, or of greater frequency or length in their prayers ; sometimes to the enormity of past sin, which they think has put them beyond the reach of redeeming love ; and sometimes, to the want of compassion in God. But these apprehensions are altogether mistaken and groundless. That the prayers of such persons are unavailing, and their souls destitute of peace, is not owing to the want of stronger excitement of feeling ; nor to the want of greater frequency or length in their prayers ; nor to the enormity of past sins ; and least of all, to any want of compassion in God. The dreadful fact, that God does not hear their prayers, is owing to this one cause,—*that they regard iniquity in*

their hearts; that their affections cleave to sin; that they dislike the service of God, and will not be bound by his holy law. It is this which bars them from the presence of God, and closes his ear to their prayers. Let them only give up their sins, and let their hearts give up the *love* of sin; and God's ear will be open to their cry. There will be no need of any tumultuous excitement of feeling;—and no need of great frequency, or length, or loudness in their prayers. God will hear the gentlest whisper. If in the secret chamber, or in the lonely walk, or on the pillow in the silence of midnight, the penitent sinner lifts up his soul to God, and says, in the softest accents, *God be merciful to me a sinner; take away all iniquity, and be my refuge and my portion*;—the God of heaven will lend a gracious ear to his supplication. Yea, God is so merciful, that he will hear *the desire* of the numble, though never uttered in words. When any are disposed to confess and forsake their sins, God graciously attends to their requests. And sometimes he anticipates their wishes, and bestows the blessings they need, before they ask for them. Thus it was with the prodigal son, when, with the language and the heart of a penitent, he returned to his father: his father's blessings came upon him faster than his requests could be offered. Such is the kindness and grace of God towards every sinner who repents. As soon as the love of sin is subdued, God comes forward in the glory of his grace, and pours into the soul a fulness of spiritual blessings.

Let then all impenitent sinners ponder well the reason, why God does not hear their prayers. *Their hearts are still wedded to sin. They still cherish in their bosoms that abominable thing which God's soul hateth.* And let them remember, that, while this is the case, they are not to expect that God will hear their prayers. He has expressly informed them, what is the condition, and the only condition, on which he will hear them. *It is a cordial readiness to confess and forsake their sins.* There is nothing they can do which will be accepted in the place of this. They may send up to God the cry of guilt and distress. They may subject themselves to watching and fasting. They may give away their goods to feed the poor. They may be willing to renounce every thing, *excepting the love of iniquity.* They may be willing to *suffer* every thing, if they may only maintain the secret league they have formed with sin. To this they cling. They will not be separated from their idols. Now faithfulness to the souls of sinners requires me to say, that while they retain such a temper of mind, they can neither do nor suffer any thing which will induce God to hear their prayers. No, my unhappy friends; you are not to look for this divine favor. A holy God can be brought into no alliance with a heart that loves what he hates. You must sacrifice the pleasures of sin, or the friendship of your Maker. You must part with sin, or part with heaven.

